This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

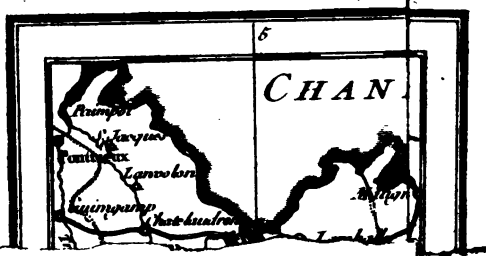
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 07138031 9


6
CHAN

AN

HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

CIVIL WAR

IN

THE VENDÉE,

FROM ITS ORIGIN TO

THE PEACE CONCLUDED AT LA JAUNAIE.

Translated from the French of

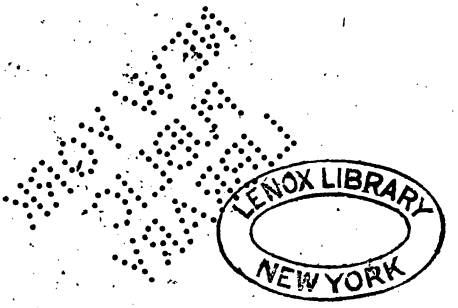
P. V. J. BERTHRE DE BOURNISEAUX,
(OF THOUARS)

Member of the Free Society of Belles Lettres and Arts of Paris, of the Literary Society of the Two Sèvres, etc.

PARIS:

PRINTED BY J. SMITH, AT THE ENGLISH PRESS
RUE VAUGIRARD, N°. 939.

1802.


LENOX LIBRARY
NEW YORK

DEDICATORY EPISTLE

TO THE

VENDÉE.

O THOU! whom Monſters have overwhelmed with ruin, laid waſte and covered with aſhes! melancholy victim of mad paſſions! unfortunate Vendée! accept this tribute of regard from one of your children: there are enough who laviſhly offer incenſe to men in power; for me, oh! my Country, it is to misfortune only, it is to thee alone, that I wiſh to devote my feeble talents,

my watchful hours, and my beſt affections. May the enthuſiaſm which inſpires me, electrify every heart, and call forth tears, ſuch as I have ſhed at the ſight of thoſe devouring flames that preyed upon thy boſom! May a regenerating Government caſt one look of pity on thee! May it view thee as I do, loaded with the gifts of nature, but deſpiſed of men; ſurrounded by ſeas, ſtreams, and rivers, but deſtitute of canals, without inland navigation, high roads, or any means of exportation for thy produce; ſituated in the midſt of a moſt fertile country, but wanting channels of commercial communication, a common centre, and even towns; reſembling, in ſhort, a great body covered with veins, but without a heart!

Oh

Oh my Country! I am perhaps deceiving myſelf with vain hopes; but methinks a bright day at length dawns upon thy deſolated plains; that Government which has given peace to Europe, which has reſtored to thee the religious worſhip of thy anceſtors and thoſe altars, in defence of which thou haſt ſhed thy blood, will be able to rouſe thee from the melancholy apathy in which thou art ſunk, and give thee a new political exiſtence.

May this delightful hope be ſpeedily confirmed! May my feeble voice haſten the moment of its accompliſhment! Unhappy Vendée, how diſintereſted are the ſentiments by which I am guided towards thee, and the affectionate ſhare which I take in thy misfortunes! I neither ſeek places, reputation, riches, nor even that kind of celebrity

lebrity which is acquired by pleading for the wretched; my only wiſh is to ſee thy ruins repaired, and thy wounds healed once more; thy proſperity will be mine, and my ſweeteſt reward; in a word, Oh! my Country, I can be happy only in thy welfare.

PREFACE

PREFACE.

THERE are few States in Europe that at different periods have not been a prey to the fury of civil war. Without going further back than the age of Charlemagne, what blood has been ſhed in Europe, by fatal inteſtine diſputes! Italy and Germany probably feel to this day the havoc and the deſtructive ſtruggles of the Guelphs and Gibelines; England, the bloody conteſts between the houſes of York and Lancaſter; Sweden, the wars of Chriſtiern and Vaſa; and Spain the funeral piles and ſcaffolds which ſhe ſo long erected in Flanders and in Holland. What has been the reſult of ſo many terrible ſhocks to theſe different nations? a general decline in every branch of the body politic. The decay of agriculture has been neceſſarily accompanied by that of population; and liberal ideas, national ſpirit,

ſpirit, and patriotiſm, the vital ſtrength of a nation, have gradually diſappeared. If we caſt a ſingle glance upon the ſtate of modern Europe, we ſhall eaſily perceive that Italy is now nothing more than a mere ſkeleton decorated with an empty name; that Germany has loſt more than one half of that numerous population, which maintained its independence againſt all the efforts of the Romans; that England is now only another modern Carthage, obliged to pay mercenaries for her defence; that Sweden has a very precarious exiſtence, and that Spain is reduced to depend for her defence on the magnanimity of her allies.

Although France has had leſs to complain of inteſtine diviſions than her neighbours, ſhe has nevertheleſs been frequently on the point of expiring under the cruel wounds received in the courſe of her civil wars.

The cradle of the monarchy was ſtained with the blood which the animoſity of the children

children of Clovis on the one hand, and the ambition of the mayors of the palace and the weakneſs of the laſt Mærovingian kings on the other, cauſed to flow. The Feudal Government ſpeedily ſucceeded this anarchy, the ſtate was divided into as many parties as there were lords and caſtles, and the firſt kings of the Capet race were reduced to be mere ſpectators of the fury of their ſubjects. Louis-le-Gros and ſome of his ſucceſſors attempted in vain to check the progreſs of theſe diſorders; the fatal rivalſhips of the Plantagenets and the race of Valois, gave France no time to revive after ſo many misfortunes; its blood ran in torrents, and notwithſtanding all the exertions of the greateſt of her Kings, Charles the Wiſe, the factions of the Armagnacs and the Burgundians ſoon exhauſted the remaining ſtrength of the country. It was leſs to the genius of Charles the VIIth than to the diverſions which the red and white roſes occaſioned in England, that France was indebted for her ſafety; never was ſhe ſo near being ſhipwrecked. The calm, how-

ever, which the country then experienced was only of very ſhort duration: ſcarcely had a century elapſed when all its wounds broke out afreſh. A religious mania ſuddenly ſezied the majority of the French nation. The ambitious great aſſumed a reſpectable maſk, and whilſt the people were murdering each other for differences of opinion, hypocrites conteſted for the honor of holding the bloody reins of the ſtate. Theſe deplorable troubles calmed by Henry, were entirely appeaſed by Richelieu. Under his ſucceſſor, diſcord again reared its ſtandard, but France was wearied with ſo many ſucceſſive ſhocks: the faction of Fronde and its King of the Halls became the ſubjects of ridicule; the firm and ſevere Government of Lewis the XIVth again reſtored order in the ſtate.

The ſprings of Government, were however ſoon relaxed again under the reign of his ſelfiſh and intemperate ſucceſſor; the throne, defiled by proſtitution, loſt its ancient majeſty, and became in the eyes of the people nothing

nothing but an empty ſhadow; the unfortunate Lewis the XVIth fell, under the ſtroke of a daring party, and expiated the crimes of his predeceſſors. France, although undeceived with reſpect to her Kings, viewed with compaſſion a Prince, more unfortunate than guilty, tumbled headleſs from a throne. In many provinces, pity took place of the ſentiments of revenge and indignation. The noble enthuſiaſm of 1789, was almoſt extinguiſhed, no remains of it were found except in the army; factious men by the aid of the magic words of liberty and patriotiſm, had got poſſeſſion of power, and France, plunged in a deluge of blood and carnage, became an arena in which ruffians diſputed the ſpoils of its beſt citizens, and every part of the body politic was in a ſtate of ſuffering, when to the horrors of foreign hoſtility was added the ſcourge of civil war. In my Introduction I ſhall point out the cauſes of that lamentable conteſt which often brought to the very brink of ruin that formidable Republic, now re-eſtabliſhed upon its firmeſt

baſis, and in ſome meaſure rendered immortal by the genius of a protecting Hero! As a ſpectator and witneſs of the reciprocal fury of the contending parties, I venture to flatter myſelf, that my teſtimony will not be queſtioned. I relate what I ſaw and heard.

—— Quæque ipse miserrima vidi.

By the light of the flames which ſurrounded me on every ſide, and were conſuming the unhappy Vendée, I ventured to write its Hiſtory; the tumult of battle and the accents of death often ſtruck my ear, whilſt I was writing, and interrupted the thread of my narrative. The reader will eaſily perceive in peruſing this work, the various movements of terror, pity and indignation, which agitated my mind in thoſe terrible moments; but if it was impoſſible for me amidſt the horrors and aſſaſſinations which deſolated my country to keep my mind in a ſtate of perfect tranquillity, I am not afraid of being accuſed of having written its Hiſtory with partiality. I here declare by every thing

moſt

moſt ſacred among men, that no ſentiment unworthy of a liberal mind, or any private views, have guided my pen. One thought alone occupied my mind, engaged in writing this Sketch; namely, that an hiſtorian who feels all the dignity of his functions, ought rather to ſacrifice his life than deceive poſterity.

Vitam impendere vero.

I have paſſed ſlightly over the mutual cruelties committed on both ſides, perſuaded that it was uſeleſs to terrify our deſcendants with the narrative of our crimes.

I foreſee that ſome eye witneſſes will accuſe me of having omitted intereſting particulars of the different battles which I have deſcribed: others may pretend that I have confounded dates, and events: I ſhall anſwer to theſe objections; that my deſcriptions of battles are founded upon the official reports which I procured at the time, both from the Republicans and the Vendeans,

deans, and to which I have added the teſtimonies of well informed friends, who had been actors or ſpectators of thoſe ſcenes. Any man, who after having been preſent at a battle, pretends to know all its details, is a preſumptuous character to whom I have nothing to reply. Let a hundred officers be interrogated reſpecting the cauſes which decided the victory of Mans, let their teſtimonies be compared, and the reader will be convinced the truth of what I advance. Let then even the witneſſes of theſe events beware of ſaying, that "the Hiſtorian is miſtaken," till they have reflected and examined if they may not be themſelves in error.

My Hiſtorical Sketch begins at the period of 1792, and finiſhes at the general pacification of 1795. I did not think it neceſſary to write the Hiſtory of the Troubles of the Vendée during the ſeventh year. The ſymptoms of that freſh exploſion, indeed, made their appearance under a tremendous aſpect,

and

and the consequences of that appeal to arms, might have become fatal; but the immortal day of the 18th Brumaire, by overturning an oppressive Government, calmed all factions, and united all parties. This last insurrection did not, therefore, give rise to any important event, except the battle of Aubiers, which was gained by the commander of batallion, Hardouin, and by the steadiness of Captain La Vigne. That brave officer, intrenched three days in the Church of Aubiers, with two hundred men, resisted the efforts of a whole army, and gave Hardouin time to come to his relief. The names of these two men will long be dear to the proprietors in the Vendée; they will never forget the important services rendered them by those officers, who prevented the return of civil war, and thereby rescued their property from fresh devastation and horrors of every kind.

INTRODUCTION.

FRANCE, on the death of Lewis the XVth, preſented an alarming appearance to the world. The diſgraceful cloſe of that reign had entirely overcaſt the ſplendour of its auſpicious commencement; the Monarchy had in ſome meaſure grown old with the Monarch; and the body politic ſeemed to partake of the decrepitude of the head of the State. An exhauſted population, deranged finances, corrupted and immoral miniſters, wars undertaken with levity, and conducted with folly and weakneſs, a ruined navy, a diſcontented army, powerful enemies, ſhameful treaties of peace, ruinous and diſgraceful ceſſions of territories in the new world; in ſhort, a univerſally prevailing egotiſm, all preſented to the diſ-

cerning mind, the ſymptoms of a dreadful revolution, and the appearance of a State verging to its ruin.

In the midſt of this deplorable confuſion, what principally ſtruck judicious obſervers, was, the general corruption of manners. Proſtitution was become the idol of the court, and the people were alike proſtituted. Good faith, juſtice, morality, and almoſt all the ſocial virtues had diſappeared from the French territory, and the vileſt libertiniſm had taken place of the auſtere manners of the Gauls and the Franks. Seated upon that throne which the Charlemagnes and the Philips had renedred illuſtrious, the infamous Du Barry, proud of her aſcendancy over the decayed Monarch, gave laws imperiouſly to a degenerated people. Places and honours were all put into the hands of brokers, every thing was ſold at court; every employment had its regulated price, virtue alone was accounted nothing; and inſtead of the Barres, the Triſtans, the Montignys

tignys, who formerly were the ornaments of the court of Philip Auguſtus, that of Lewis was the picture of a Dionyſius ſurrounded by the vileſt flatterers.

Lewis the XVIth began his reign, and the ſimplicity of his manners checked for a moment the general corruption. A virtuous citizen, but a weak king; with the candour of the ſon of Charlemagne, without poſſeſſing his courage; what dyke could he oppoſe to the licentuous torrent of the age! His good intentions availed nothing againſt the univerſal depravity: though an economical Prince, he could not prevent depredations upon the finances; and though zealous in favour of purity of morals, all his efforts for their reformation only rendered him the deriſion of the court; religious himſelf, he had the misfortune to ſee atheiſm making freſh progreſs, and effacing in the hearts of the people every ſentiment of reſpect for the moral virtues; upon the whole,

Lewis the XVIth was born to diſprove that celebrated proverb:

Regis ad exemplar totus componitur orbis.

If this Prince had attempted to ſtop the progreſs of the revolution, it is eaſy to conceive that his efforts would have been fruitleſs. Such an undertaking required talents of the firſt magnitude, and Lewis did not poſſeſs thoſe talents; unable to ſtop the rapidity of the revolution which was ſapping his throne to the foundations, he was buried under its ruins.

God forbid that I ever ſhould become the apologiſt of the crimes which have ſtained the revolution: if its effects have been fortunate, with what ſtreams of blood has the good been purchaſed! If poſterity ſhould one day render juſtice to the merit and talents of certain celebrated men, it will devote to execration numbers of thoſe modern ſons of Pelias, who cut their father into pieces to give him a new exiſtence.

In

In 1789, the Revolution took place; two thirds of the French embraced it with enthuſiaſm; by a natural conſequence enough, the other third beheld nothing in the new ſyſtem but an hydra preparing their deſtruction.

The nobility and clergy, who, after having attained the higheſt ſummit of riches and honours, found themſelves not only levelled with the claſs of the loweſt mechanics, but even purſued by a miſtaken people amidſt the ſmoaking ruins of their caſtles; whoſe deſolated lands no longer furniſhed them with a certain proviſion for their ſubſiſtence; theſe men were of courſe the declared hereditary enemies to the revolution. To have expected their ſupport to the new order of things, would have argued but little knowledge of the human heart, and would have been to require a miracle from philoſophy, when we know of none that philoſophy has performed.

But what in the hiſtory of our times poſterity will hear with ſurpriſe, is that in an unknown

unknown corner of France, an obſcure claſs of poor and wretched peaſants, emancipated by the revolution from the payment of tythes, and the land tax, and thus deriving the greateſt advantages from that event, ſhould alone have dared to declare againſt the new order of things, clamorouſly called for by almoſt the whole French nation; ſhould alone have attempted to rear a wall of ſeparation between itſelf and the reſt of France, and endeavour to preſerve what it was the general wiſh to deſtroy. I am aware I ſhall be anſwered, that it was the ſuggeſtions of the nobles and prieſts, which determined theſe unfortunate inhabitants to make theſe aſtoniſhing efforts, under the weight of which they ſunk at laſt. It is however notorious, that the nobles and the prieſts (with ſome very few exceptions) had no ſhare in fomenting this inteſtine war; thoſe claſſes were too well informed not to perceive the prodigious inequality of the ſtruggle between a ſingle corner of France and the whole united maſs of the kingdom. This fact is certain, nor is there a Vendean who

who is ignorant, that the leading chiefs of the Vendée were compelled by the threats of the revolted inhabitants to join the common cause. At the pacification, the chiefs and the priests were the first who embraced with ardour the offers held out, and which the peasants were the last to accept.

It is true that when the nobility and clergy had once engaged in the insurrection, they used every effort, and exerted all their influence to procure the success of their party. The civil war was produced by three causes, all foreign to the pretended insinuations against the nobles and priests.

The first, beyond all doubt, was the execrable tyranny of the Jacobins, and the horrors of which France was too long a witness and a victim. The Vendean, full of respect for morality and the social institutions, which are its effects, could not view, without shuddering, the total overthrow of the body politic; he could not bear to trample

trample under foot what he had been accuſtomed to reſpect for ſo many ages; inimical to all innovation, he could not comprehend the philoſophical jargon of our modern Brutuſes; and to uſe a jacobinical expreſſion, he was not ripe for the Revolution.]

The ſecond cauſe of the Vendean war was, the perſecution againſt the Catholic Religion; a perſecution as unjuſt in its principles as it was dangerous in its conſequences. In vain did Jacobin miſſionaries iſſue from the capital, and with the voice of demoniacs, attempt to infect the peaceful plains with their fanaticiſm, and endeavour to perſuade thoſe good peaſants, that the Catholic Religion was a tiſſue of fabulous nonſenſe, that there was neither a God, nor Immortality of the Soul, and that they ought to erect temples only to Reaſon, and that this ſame Reaſon was only to be found in Jacobin clubs and taverns; the inhabitants of the Vendée, ſurpriſed at the novelty

novelty of theſe maxims, and the ſtrange manners of theſe zealous apoſtles, had no doubt of their intention to pervert and make them converts to revolutionary fanaticiſm. All their harangues were therefore fruitleſs, and tended to attach the Vendée more than ever to its ancient worſhip and its miniſters; they keenly felt indeed the blows aimed from every quarter at theſe objects of their reſpect; and after having for a long while lamented them in ſilence, they at length oppoſed rage to rage, and thus gave this diſaſtrous war a tincture of ferocity, with which it would never otherwiſe have been marked. Finally, the third cauſe was the forced levy of three hundred thouſand men; this conſcription decided the yet undetermined Vendean, and was, properly ſpeaking, the firebrand of the general conflagration. I ſhall explain this more fully in the ſubſequent chapters, and I hope the reader will be ſatisfied with the explanations which ſhall there be given.

The civil war broke out in 1792, and after a variety of defeats and victories, terminated in 1795. Thanks to the wiſdom of the commiſſioners, ſent by the French Government to prevent the ruin of a part of France! But for their prudent and temperate meaſures, how much blood would it have further coſt, to reduce the Vendée! They ſeemed to appear in the midſt of the tempeſt, like thoſe lights which precede the ceſſation of ſtorms; and while they wiped away the tears of the unfortunate Vendeans with one hand, they repreſſed the efforts of thoſe ferocious anarchiſts, who, like devouring ravens, are gratified only when hovering over human carcaſſes and rivers of blood.

The Plan of this Work is as follows:

Firſt, What was the condition, population, and ſtate of agriculture and commerce of the Vendée before the war?

Second, The hiſtorical ſketch of that war?

Third,

Third, What is the preſent ſtate of the Vendée?

Fourth, Which are the moſt effectual means of reſtoring what that country has loſt, and even of increaſing its agriculture and commerce ſo as to carry them to the higheſt pitch of ſplendour?

I have undertaken only a ſketch of this ſubject, leaving it to be diſcuſſed more fully by able pens. If my ideas towards promoting the welfare of my country are approved of by Government; if they are followed by one law, one meaſure, favourable to thoſe whoſe cauſe I plead, I ſhall conſider myſelf repaid for my labour, and ſhall find my reward in the happineſs of the whole.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

Dedicatory Epiſtle to the Vendée. - - iii
Preface. - - - - - - - - - - - - vii
Introduction. - - - - - - - - - - xvii

CHAPTER I.

Origin of the Vendée. - - - - - - - 1

CHAPTER II.

Extent, Population, and Commerce of the Vendée, previous to the War. - - - - - 7

CHAPTER III.

War in the Vendée.—Campaign of 1792. 19

CHAPTER IV.

Campaign of 1793. - - - - - - - - 42

CHAPTER V.

Continuation of the Campaign of 1793 - 61

CHAPTER VI.

Paſſage of the Loire - - - - - - - 105

CHAPTER VII.

PAGE

Campaign of 1794. - - - - - - - 127

CHAPTER VIII.

Of the interior Government of the Vendée during the War.—Anecdotes of the moſt celebrated Generals on each ſide. - - - - 149

CHAPTER IX.

State of Commerce and Agriculture in the Vendée ſince the War. - - - - - - - - - 163

SUPPLEMENT.

CHAPTER I.

Language of the Vendeans. - - - - - 175

CHAPTER II.

Of their private Qualities. - - - - - 180

CHAPTER III.

Of their Diverſions. - - - - - - - - 184

CHAPTER IV.

State of the Arts and Sciences in the Vendée. 188

CHAPTER V.

Dreſs of the Vendeans. - - - - - - 193

CHAPTER VI.

PAGE

Their Weddings. - - - - - - - 195

CHAPTER VII.

Of Conjurers. - - - - - - - - - 202

CHAPTER VIII.

Natural Hiſtory. - - - - - - - - 205

CHAPTER IX.

Principal means of the Reſtoration of the Vendée. - - - - - - - - - - 209

CHAPTER X.

Secondary means of Reſtoration. - - - 245

CHAPTER XI.

Concluſion. - - - - - - - - - 259

NOTES,

Containing the Juſtificatory Papers alluded to in the Work. - - - - - - - - 265

AN

HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL VIEW OF THE CIVIL WAR IN THE VENDÉE.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN OF THE VENDEANS.

IT may perhaps be deemed extraordinary that I ſhould aſſign an origin to the Vendeans, different from that which is common to the French: but when we meditate on the figure, manners, and character of this people, it will be difficult to conſider them as any other than the deſcendants of thoſe Scythian nations, which under the reigns of the laſt Emperors of the Weſt, overran Italy and the Gauls. Sigebert, Baronius, author of the Annals

of Aquitain, and Gregory of Tours, inform us, that in the third and fourth ages of the Chriſtian era, an army of Huns, Vandals, and other barbarous tribes, commanded by their king Chroccus, aſſiſted and augmented by a horde of Picts, whoſe Scythian origin was alſo common to the Huns; after having laid waſte part of the Eaſtern provinces of France, fell upon the coaſt, and pillaged and ranſacked Poitou. Theſe barbarians did not long remain maſters of the provinces which they had conquered. Defeated by the troops ſent againſt them, the greateſt part were deſtroyed; and the remainder eſtabliſhed themſelves on the ſea-coaſt, in Lower Poitou, (the name given by the Picts to their conqueſt) where they were enabled to receive aſſiſtance from their countrymen, who had eſtabliſhed themſelves in Scotland. In the confuſion which reigns among authors who mention theſe events, it is not eaſy for the reader to fix the exact time of this invaſion. If we are to credit Baronius, it happened in the year 261; but other writers have dated it at the beginning of the fifth century. The latter account ſeems the moſt probable to many modern hiſtorians. However that may be, it is certain that the Huns, Vandals, and Picts, ſubjected the weſtern provinces of France, and that a part of them eſtabliſhed themſelves

in

in Lower Poitou and in the country of the Armorici, along the coaſt of Brittany. It is to this point, which cannot be controverted, that we muſt fix our attention. This fact has never met with any ſerious oppoſition; and is ſpoken of by too many hiſtorians to permit us to withold our aſſent. I will venture to add, that even were writers not agreed on this ſubject, it would be impoſſible to give credit to the common origin of the Vendeans and of the reſt of the French. Let them read the deſcriptions which Livy, Tacitus, Dion, Procupius, and Jornandes have left us of the Franks, the Gauls, and the different Scythian nations; let them compare theſe with that of the Vendeans, and decide to which of thoſe nations they bear the greateſt reſemblance.

DESCRIPTION OF THE VENDEANS.

The Vendean is of middling ſtature, and well made; a large head, thick neck, of a pale complexion, black hair, and ſmall but expreſſive eyes; ſuch are the leading features of theſe people. Their underſtanding is ſlow but ſolid, their tem-

per is generous but irascible; their conceptions less quick than just; faithful to their engagements; with simple and even pure manners; a strong attachment to religious institutions; an extraordinary degree of taciturnity, but softened by a great benevolence; minds more fitted for moderate though less lucrative employment, than for difficult labour; a total indifference for the pleasures of the table; great integrity in commerce; little aptitude for the fine arts, but much for the abstract sciences; of a bilious and melancholy habit of body; with no philosophical principle, but a disdain for life, and stoical contempt of death; slow of decision in the ordinary occurrences of life, but capable, under the impulse of passion, of the most ardent activity, and of the most heroical exploits: such is the character of the Vendean.*

The

* I shall here present the reader with a sketch of the character of the Gauls and also of the Franks.

"The Gauls are fair and of large stature, they have naturally red hair, are ready to take up arms, but their courage forsakes them at the first repulse, and they want spirit and resolution in defeat. At the onset they are more like lions than men, but at the second, they are worse than women."

POLYBIUS, CESAR, STRABO, AND LIVY.

"The Franks are of lofty stature, light hair, and blue eyes. They unite vigor and strength of body, to grace and beauty.

Fond

The reader will not expect every inhabitant of the Vendée to anſwer this deſcription. A traveller who ſhould ſurvey theſe countries, and find ſome of the people large, fair, and ſprightly, in a word, not anſwering to the ſketch I have given, will perhaps ſuſpect that I have been miſtaken; but I appeal from this deciſion to the enlightened obſerver, who, for many years has inhabited the country, and ſubmit, without apprehenſion, to the judgment he ſhall form.

We find indeed amidſt the ancient conquerors of lower Poitou, a mixed race, deſcended from ſome remains of the ancient inhabitants, from the Viſigoths, who were eſtabliſhed there for ſo long a time, and perhaps, from ſome deſcendants of thoſe Franks who accompanied Clovis to the conqueſt of Aquitain: but the greater part of the inhabitants bearing a reſemblance to the foregoing deſcription, we may, without fear of contradiction, aſſert that they have a Scythian origin.

Fond of war and ſpoil, they cannot bear the name of peace, and ſeem bound together by one common ardor."

CLAUDIAN, EUMENIUS, AND SIDONIUS-APPOLLINARIUS.

Let the reader compare theſe deſcriptions with that I have given of the Vendeans, and decide for himſelf.

Upon

Upon the whole, in perusing this Chapter, the reader will be convinced that the Vendeans inherit more of the virtues than the vices of their anceſtors. Be that as it may, have they loſt, or have they gained by this origin ?. I leave the reader of this Hiſtorical Eſſay to determine the queſtion.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER II.

EXTENT, POPULATION, AND COMMERCE OF THE VENDÉE PREVIOUS TO THE WAR.

IT is rather difficult to fix any preciſe bounds to the Inſurgent Country known under the name of the Vendée. The greater part of the towns, ſuch as Fontenay, la Chateigneraie, Breſſuire, and Thouars, having taken no part in the inſurrection of the ſurrounding Communes, it would ſeem unjuſt to enumerate them in the liſt of the Vendean or inſurgent diſtricts. Nevertheleſs, in order to fix ſome limit to the ſeat of this War, I am compelled to lay down as its boundary, from ſouth-weſt to north, the courſe of the Loire, from Saumur to Nantes; and from north to eaſt and ſouth, the great road from Saumur to Rochelle. At the ſame time, I muſt inform the reader, that nearly a fourth of this territory took no active part in the plans of the Vendeans, and that on the contrary the inhabitants of the greater part of the towns included in this ſpace enliſted in defence of the Republic. I ſhall, nevertheleſs, ſtyle this country the Vendée for

for reaſons I have juſt given. This territory contains nearly eight hundred and ſixty ſquare leagues, in which are ſituated ſeven hundred communes, whoſe population before the war, was eſtimated at eight hundred thouſand inhabitants. The population of ſuch a fertile country, would without doubt have been much more conſiderable, had the Intendants who were in poſſeſſion of the government thought proper to give it more of their attention; but altogether employed in the immediate produce of their capitals, they never dreamt of the reſources which were to be drawn from the fertility of the Soil; nor had their predeceſſors regarded this part of their adminiſtration as of any importance, or as an object the leaſt capable of improvement. The intendants, it is true, were not the only perſons to be blamed for this neglect, for it muſt be admitted, that at that period, plans of agricultural improvement, from which our neighbours have reaped ſo many advantages, were totally unknown among us. Triſles had too much engaged our attention to ſuffer us to dwell with complacency on any thing which bore the marks of utility. If an intendant employed the reſources of a whole province to build a theatre in its capital to lay out a magnificent ſquare, or to decorate a public garden, he was ſure of gaining general

conſideration

conſideration and eſteem; his name, inſcribed on thoſe gaudy monuments, was crowned with immortality. On the contrary, had he employed this money in the clearing of land, in opening of canals, in draining marſhes, or in other objects of public utility, he would have been treated as an innovator, or as an economiſt; his avarice and pitiful conceptions been the ſubjects of animadverſion and ridicule; he would have been attacked in pamphlets and lampoons, and, after having been overwhelmed by the cenſures of the moſt conſiderable perſons in the province, he would have been recalled and diſgraced by the court. The monarchy in France under this point of view, reſembled a ſtripling, who found nothing great that did not dazzle, and nothing uſeful that was not covered with gold or ſilver lace.

Utilium tardus proviſor, prodigus æris.

Under the adminiſtration of ſuch intendants, the Vendée could never riſe to any degree of great improvement, and with every kind of plenty at home there was no exportation for their ſuperfluities; commerce was ſtagnant, and induſtry fettered at every ſtep. Thus abandoned, deſtitute

deſtitute of aid or influence; deprived of the foſtering care of Government, without which a province is as it were a deſert, how was it poſſible that the population of this country ſhould have increaſed. The Vendée in this ſtate reſembled Holland, under the government of the Houſe of Burgundy; like this country it was poor, deſpiſed, as it were unknown, and, in ſhort, ſcarcely thought worthy of being numbered in the liſt of provinces. There is a ſtriking reſemblance in ſeveral points between the fate of Holland and that of the Vendée. If, when rouſed from long and diſgraceful ſlumbers, the Dutchmen ſeveral times carried terror into the formidable empire of Philip II. the Vendean, aſhamed of the yoke under which France groaned from the oppreſſion of Robeſpierre, has with equal ardor, by prodigious efforts, and innumerable actions of heroiſm, ſhaken his coloſſal power. Happy had the country no cauſe to ſhed tears over its triumphs, and equally happy if the Jacobins had been the only victims of the diſaſtrous and diſgraceful war, which they had provoked. I am far from being of the ſame opinion with thoſe revolutionary philoſophers, who have inſiſted that inſurrection againſt tyranny is the moſt ſacred of duties. They little ſuſpected when they advanced

vanced this propoſition that a part of France would ſhortly turn this erroneous principle againſt themſelves, and that the blood of thouſands of Frenchmen would mark its error and abſurdity. But to return to my ſubject.

The reader will bear in mind the limits I have laid down for the Vendée. Before we ſpeak of its productions and commerce, I ſhall divide it into two parts, in order to facilitate my obſervations. I ſhall therefore call the country ſituated on this ſide the Sèvre Nantaiſe, the Lower Vendée, and that on the oppoſite ſide of the ſame river, the Upper Vendée

Although theſe two diviſions reſemble each other in the character, the manners of their inhabitants, and ſome of their productions, there is a conſiderable difference in the nature and fertility of their ſoil. The Lower Vendée, ſituated on the ſea coaſt, was nothing more than a long range of marſhes, from which is extracted excellent ſalt, and which produces wheat of the firſt quality, flax, hemp, draught-horſes, and a few ſheep and oxen. That part moſt remote from the ſea, produces excellent rye, timber for building,

and

and fire wood, of which the country near the ſea is deſtitute.

The Upper Vendée produces rye of the firſt quality: it alſo rears excellent mules, which compenſate to the inhabitants the want of draught horſes, and which being in high repute, are purchaſed at a dear rate by the Spaniards at the fairs of Champ-Deniers. Some cantons alſo rear ſheep, which for ſize, quality of the fleece, and goodneſs of fleſh, vie with the moſt eſteemed in France: * Theſe ſheep are ſent to Paris, for the conſumption of the Metropolis, and their wool is a conſiderable object of commerce with the neighbouring departments. The fat oxen, with which our largeſt cities are ſupplied, of whoſe ſucculent juices the Engliſh are ſo proverbially fond, and on which foreigners in general place ſo much value, are reared in this diſtrict, which alſo furniſhes Normandy and the reſt of France with draught-oxen; theſe after three years growth are taken out of their rich paſtures and ſent into the interior provinces, where they are employed in agriculture.

* The ſheep bred in the mountains of Mortagne are held in the higheſt eſtimation.

The

The fine thread, called *dougy*, employed in the manufactories of Chollet in making fine handkerchiefs, is ſpun from the flax of the Upper Vendée, which, as well as the hemp, is conſidered as much ſuperior to that grown in the lower part: and to form an idea of the prodigious quantity of wood with which this country is covered, the reader need only be informed that timber and fire wood are at a much cheaper rate than in any other part of France. Holland is alſo ſupplied from the northern part with white wines and brandy, which, conveyed in carriages to Montrieul Bellay, are embarked on the Thoué, and conveyed from Saumur to Nantes, where the merchants freight their veſſels with theſe commodities. Beſides theſe neceſſaries of life, the inhabitants gather a prodigious quantity of cheſnuts, and apples, of which they make excellent cyder: their numerous dairies furniſh them with butter far ſuperior to the beſt in Brittany; and the country alſo ſupplies them with buck wheat, millet and turnips, on which they feed their cattle.

On comparing the reſpective advantages which their different productions give to the Upper and Lower Vendée, it is difficult to decide which is moſt favoured by Nature. The ineſtimable advantages

advantages which the Lower Vendée derives from its vicinity to the ſea, ſeem at firſt ſight to decide in its favor; but if we conſider the peſtilential vapours which exhale from its marſhes, and the unwholeſome qualities of its waters*, we muſt admit, that theſe advantages are dearly purchaſed.

It muſt be allowed, however, that the natives live to nearly the ſame age as the inhabitants of the other provinces, and that the noxious air and unwholeſome waters have no influence, except in perſons unaccuſtomed to the climate.

The Upper Vendée is watered by four or five rivers, of which the Thoué and the Sèvre-Nantaiſe are the moſt conſiderable, and a great number of ſprings and fountains are alſo included in this diſtrict.

The Lower Vendée is more favored in this reſpect than the Upper. Beſides a great number of rivers, ſuch as the Sèvre, Niortaiſe, Authiel,

* The infected air of the marſhes and the corrupted water which the inhabitants are under the neceſſity of drinking, operated as fatally on the Republican army as the followers of Charette.

and

and the Vendée, which run acroſs the country, it is bounded on one ſide by the Loire, and on the other by the Sea.

When we conſider theſe numerous advantages, we might be permitted to affirm, that this beautiful country might be made the moſt flouriſhing part of France.

Before we ſpeak of the commerce, the exports, and imports of the Vendée, I ought to inform the reader, that the account already before him, as well as that which follows, is applicable only to the ſtate of the country previous to the cruel war which has covered it with ruins and aſhes. Notwithſtanding the benevolent efforts of the magiſtrates which the government has choſen for the adminiſtration of this province, many years muſt paſs before the dreadful wounds inflicted on its trade, population, and means of exiſtence can be healed, unleſs the government, laying aſide all feeble palliatives, ſhould adopt a general plan of reſtoration, which as yet a deſtructive war has not permitted it to accompliſh.

Previous to the war, the Vendée exported annually nearly five hundred thouſand quintals of

of corn, three parts of which were rye,* ſixty thouſand quintals§ of hemp and flax, two thouſand and ninety ditto of wool, ſix thouſand head of cattle, twenty thouſand draught-oxen, three thouſand draught-horſes, two thouſand mules, ten thouſand ſquare metres‡ of plank and timber, twenty-five thouſand ſteres† of fire wood, eight hundred quintals of charcoal, twenty-ſix thouſand ditto of hay, twenty-ſix thouſand ditto of butter and more than one hudred thouſand of ſalt, excluſive of the fiſhery, cheſnuts, millet, and other inferior ſorts of proviſions, for which there was a conſiderable ſale.

With all theſe advantages, I am perſuaded that this commerce is capable of ſtill greater extenſion.

The importations of the Vendée, before the war, for its internal conſumption, were ten thouſand hogſheads of wine; ſince the peace, this conſumption is reduced a tenth, which is a ſevere

* Vide Chapter XI.

§ A quintal weighs one hundred pounds Engliſh.

‡ A metre is ſomewhat more than three feet Engliſh.

† A ſtere is ſomewhat more than a cube of three feet Engliſh.

blow

blow to the trade of the neighbouring departments; it imported likewiſe all the clothing of the inhabitants, as well as ſtuffs, ſilks, cottons, printed calicoes, painted cloths, fuſtians, dreſſed hides, iron, ſteel, braſs, pewter, lead, caps, hats, ſilk ſtockings, ſugar, oil, medicinal and other drugs, all ſorts of groceries, all kinds of articles of gold and ſilver, and in ſhort, almoſt every ſpecies of manufacture and commerce, poſſeſſing no other manufactories than thoſe of paper fabricated at Mortagne, and of handkerchiefs at Chollet.

The reader will obſerve from what has been advanced, and by comparing the amount of the importations with the exportations, deducting the expence of cultivation and maintenance from the latter, that there remains but little advantage to the Vendean on the ſcore of commerce. According to the calculation I have made, the benefit ſcarcely exceeds a twentieth part. The cauſes of this are,

Firſt, The want of great roads, and even of pathways.

Secondly, The want of manufactures and navigable rivers in the interior of the country.

Thirdly, The careleſsneſs and inattention of government.

The Vendée therefore was not rich in coin, ſince the inhabitants gave with one hand what they received with the other. Having no great capitaliſts among them, they could not engage in extenſive commercial concerns. Remedy the defects I have ſtated, and the exports of the Vendée will ſoon increaſe in a tenfold proportion, its imports will ſenſibly diminiſh, or at leaſt be conſidered leſs burdenſome, and the country now miſerable and exhauſted will become rich and flouriſhing.

The plans which muſt be put in execution to attain this deſirable end, ſhall be the ſubject of the following pages. I have hitherto given a ſtate the population and commerce of the Vendée previous to the war. Its ſtate ſince the war ſhall be treated of, after giving an hiſtorical ſummary of the three campaigns, which have laid this unfortunate country in ruins.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER III.

WAR IN THE VENDÈE. CAMPAIGN OF 1792.

ALTHOUGH I ſhall not pretend to write the hiſtory of the civil war which has deſolated the Vendée, nor do I think the time is yet come when its hiſtory ought to be written, I cannot forbear giving at leaſt a ſlight ſketch of theſe dreadful tranſactions. This war is too nearly connected with the ſubject of which I am treating, to ſuffer me to paſs it by unnoticed; and it would be wrong to conceal the cauſes, when I am ſpeaking of its effect. I enter, therefore, on this painful task by recommending myſelf to the indulgence and impartiality of my reader. I am conſcious that at every ſtep I take, I ſhall be contradicted by numbers, who will all declare themſelves to have been eye witneſſes*. To ſuch I ſhall anſwer beforehand,

* When the Baſtille was taken, more than a thouſand eye-witneſſes, who narrated the circumſtances of this capture,

hand, that thoſe from whom I have collected theſe facts, have been alſo to my certain knowledge eye witneſſes, who have appeared to me ſo much the more worthy of credit, as they have conſtantly lived in the Vendée during the whole of the war, and could have no intereſt in deceiving me.

I have already mentioned the gloomy diſcontent which prevailed in the Vendée, from the commencement of the revolution. Attached by habit and cuſtom to their ancient inſtitutions, theſe ſimple provincials did not view without horror the fall of the ancient monarchy, and the religion of their fathers ſapped to the very foundation. Friends to order, they beheld nothing in the revolution but anarchy and confuſion, and whilſt the majority of the French liſtened with enthuſiaſm to the flattering hopes of their repreſentatives, and really believed that they

gave us as many different accounts of the tranſactions. The cauſe of this variety in their accounts ariſes, perhaps, from the want of judgment in thoſe different witneſſes. Each had fixed his attention on ſome ſingle circumſtance; no one had taken in the whole of the operations and movements. From what I have ſaid, therefore, it reſults, that the evidence of one enlightened obſerver is preferable to that of a thouſand inattentive ſpectators.

had

had already attained ſeveral of the promiſed benefits, the Vendean loudly murmured at the progreſs of impiety and injuſtice, and declared in the jargon of his country that all the diſorder *would lead to nothing good*. This gloomy diſcontent, the forerunner of the ſtorm, and which was treated with contempt, might have been appeaſed at firſt; but the jacobins who had seized upon the revolution, and who, intoxicated with power, feared no obſtacle to their ambitious plans, thought no other meaſure neceſſary, in order to bring this corner of France to reaſon, than to ſend two *sans-culottes* miſſionaries thither *; they could not conceive that ſo wretched a caſte could reſiſt ſuch alluring baits as the deſtruction of the land-owners, or refuſe to take what was ſo freely offered to them; in a word, they deceived them-

* The two *ſans-culottes* miſſionaries to whom the author alludes were Genſonné, deputy from the Gironde, and one of of the moſt reſpectable members of the firſt Legiſlative body: the other was Gallois, late envoy to England, and now member of the Tribunate. Genſonné ſuffered death with the twenty-two deputies of the party called Girondiſt, who were the avowed enemies of the Jacobins. Theſe men ſo well ſucceeded in their miſſion at the time, that having pacified the country, they returned to Paris with the honorable title given them by the inhabitants of the Vendée, of "Angels of peace".—*Note of the Tranſlator.*

ſelves

ſelves, and their miſtake has coſt us nearly as much blood as the ſhooting and drowning ſcenes and other horrors which, for ſo long a time, defolated France.

The paſſions of the Vendeans were already inflamed. Diſcontented with the government, and abhorring its bloody principles, the greater part of the decrees againſt the clergy were regarded by them as ſo many crimes. Nevertheleſs, pondering in their hearts the projects which they had planned, they remained ſilent obſervers of the quarrels between the expiring monarchy and the infant republic. With ſuch diſpoſitions, a ſpark was only wanting to produce the exploſion, and in the fermentation which prevailed in France at that time, with thouſands of firebrands croſſing each other from every direction, this fatal ſpark was not long concealed.

At length, the fatal epocha of terror took place; the jacobins declaring that nothing was wanting to Frenchmen but bread and the ſword, ſeized on the property of the rich, rolled in debauchery and drunkenneſs, and, under the guiſe of Spartans, ſurpaſſed in their nocturnal orgies the ſenſuality of the Sybarite. All thoſe who were not of their party, were proſcribed by theſe fanatical apoſtles of equality, thrown into dungeons

geons in the name of liberty, and ſlaughtered, while their murderers were invoking univerſal fraternity. Theſe new Phætons, with ignorance equal to their cruelty, by their unſkilful management of the car of government, rouſed againſt them all the neighbouring nations, and by their folly lighted up a general flame which, perhaps, would ſtill have conſumed Europe, if the hand of an hero had not at length extinguiſhed it. *

No ſooner did the Vendeans experience the terrible effects of this deſtructive ſyſtem, than rouſed by

* I did not wait to manifeſt my admiration for this great man till he was placed at the head of government. On the taking of Mantua I addreſſed an ode to him.

Note of the Author.

Many ſhared the admiration of the author at the epocha he mentions; but the impartial reader will recollect that when Bonaparte was placed at the head of government, the greater part of the coalition had been ſilenced, and the iſſue of the war, from the events which had then taken place, was no longer doubtful. With reſpect to the Jacobins exciting the Potentates of Europe by their cruelties, it muſt be remembered, that the war broke out during the monarchy, and that the manifeſto of the Duke of Brunſwick preceded the reign of terror. The Author ſeems to have miſtaken the effect for the cauſe, and in his zeal againſt Jacobiniſm, to have confounded very oppoſite parties and epochas in the revolution.—*Note of the Tranſlator.*

the

the old leaven which had ſo long fermented amongſt them, they flew to arms, without conſidering the frightful precipice on which they ſtood, or the dreadful wounds they were about to inflict on their country.

The firſt ſpark of this dreadful conflagration diſplayed itſelf in the Lower Vendée. The hiſtory of the hair dreſſer, named Gaſton, is too well known to need repetition here; it will be enough to obſerve, that from this inſtant the inſurrection aſſumed a moſt formidable aſpect. The firſt body of republican troops ſent againſt the inſurgents were completely defeated, and this event, while it ſerved to increaſe the courage of the conquerors, ſtruck a mortal blow at France. In an inſtant, the inſurrection ſpread through the whole of the Lower Vendée; the greater part of the towns excepted, the inhabitants of which, more cautious and prudent, not only refuſed to join, but even made ſeveral efforts to cruſh this inſurrection in its infancy. A great number of citizens, alſo, averſe to diſorder and bloodſhed, ſought refuge from the impending ſtorm in the neighbouring departments.

The Upper Vendée was in inſurrection at almoſt the ſame inſtant. The requiſition of thirty

thirty thouſand men had irritated in a ſingular degree the inhabitants of this part of France. They had preſumed that their remaining quiet was a ſufficient act of complaiſance towards the revolution, but to be called on to defend an adminiſtration they abhorred was deemed an act of abſurdity and inſolence.

The purſuit directed againſt the refractory militia, was the ſignal of general revolt. The orders for theſe perſecutions had been ſcarcely diſpatched from Chatillon and Breſſuire, when theſe two towns found themſelves almoſt inſtantly ſurrounded by an innumerable number of half-armed peaſants, without leaders, without any ſettled plan, without any motive than that of intimidating by the diſplay of their numbers, and, in ſhort under the idea that the capture of Breſſuire and Chatillon would ſpread alarm throughout France, and cauſe the decrees of which they complained to be repealed.

Chatillon, carried by theſe numberleſs hordes, and Breſſuire, cloſely preſſed, demanded aid in the moſt urgent manner from the neighbouring towns and even from the adjoining departments. The government, till this moment, ſeemed to have taken

no notice of them, as the revolt in the Lower Vendée had cauſed but little ſenſation at Paris; but on the news of this ſecond inſurrection, the capital, the provinces, the ſuperior officers of the army, and every perſon took the alarm.

In an inſtant the roads were lined with National Guards, the only moveable troops at that time, and the general rendezvous was fixed at Breſſuire. This town withſtood the daily attacks of the inſurgents, and bravely ſeconded by the two companies of chaſſeurs and grenadiers of Thouars, the guard of Airvaut, and other patriots, defended itſelf with courage and ſucceſs. In the mean time the departmental National Guards haſtened from all quarters, and in a ſhort time reached the gates of Breſſuire. The battle which enſued did not laſt long; the Vendeans were completely routed and put to flight. I have already ſtated that they were without plan, or any fixed leader. The commanders were divided among themſelves, and had not the ſmalleſt idea of acting together; from the commencement of the engagement they ſought only for their reſpective ſafety, leaving the greater part of this ill-armed maſs, a prey to the patriots, who preſſed them on all ſides, and

cut

cut to pieces without mercy all who had not escaped.

I shall not attempt to paint the horrors which stained this victory, and shall pass over in silence the murder of women and infants, whose mangled limbs, stuck on the points of bayonets, were carried about in triumph. Unhappily, these horrors are inseparable from civil war, and in general are the deeds of a few miscreants, and not of the major part of the army; it would therefore be an injustice to impute it to them. I shall here mention one fact in support of what I have advanced, when I spoke of the character of the Vendeans, and which will serve to show to what a length they carried that unconquerable stubbornes, and stoical contempt of death which I have already noticed.

After the battle of Bressuire, pardon and life had been offered to a great number of these miserable people, on condition of crying *vive la Nation*; a few submitted to it, but the rest obstinately refused the proffered pardon, and threw themselves on their knees, ready to receive the fatal blow; and without displaying the smallest emotion, requested no other favour, than that, after death

their bodies might be covered with a ſufficient quantity of earth to protect them from the voracity of dogs and wolves. This trait, which occurred ſeveral times during the war, has been teſtified to me by more than a hundred perſons, who were eye witneſſes. The revolutioniſts attributed this extraordinary firmneſs to fanaticiſm, a term which has been applied to the Catholic religion, for ſome years paſt; but I think every honeſt mind will view with admiration ſuch fortitude in an ignorant and low-bred peaſant, of which the Zenos and Epictetuſes of old wore only the maſk.

I cannot help noticing in this place the ridiculous reports circulated by the Jacobins at Paris, and which were credited by a great number of the *badauds** ; that the Vendeans imagined they ſhould return to life again at the end of three days, and that the leaden bullets of their enemies would be changed into balls of cork. The Vendeans were for a long while amuſed with theſe ridiculous ſtories, which thoſe who circulated them did not believe, but which it was their intereſt to promulgate. But to return to my ſubject.

* A term of ridicule for a Pariſian, like that of Cockney for an inhabitant of London.

Had

Had the patriotic army been ſkilfully commanded, the battle of Breſſuire would have put an end to the civil war. To effect this, they had only to puniſh a few of the principal leaders, grant a general pardon to the reſt, eſtabliſh a ſyſtem of prudence, good faith, and of ſeverity tempered by mercy and juſtice, and finally, ſtation a detachment of troops in each canton, to awe the mal-contents.

Such a line of conduct would have infallibly met with ſucceſs, but at this melancholy period, few knew how to obey, and all were eager to command: the departments, the diſtricts, the clubs, the different commiſſioners, the inferior officers, and even the private ſoldier, each in their turn thwarted the plans and views of their generals, from the preference which they gave to their own. In a word, the anarchy of the capital had diffuſed itſelf into the armies, and in thoſe diſaſtrous times, victory was leſs to be attributed to the ſkilful conduct of our generals, than to the invincible courage of our troops.

The patriotic army, principally compoſed of fathers of families, inſtead of following this plan, dictated

dictated by prudence, abandoned the theatre of war the inſtant the firſt tumult had ſubſided. Anxious to ſee their homes and families, each perſon carried back the news of their triumphs, and at length left only a ſmall garriſon at Breſſuire. Nothing could be more impolitic than ſuch conduct, as the event now proved; for the Vendeans, recovered from their firſt alarm, flew to arms, and the war became more bloody than ever.

To repair this fault, the government ſent a general with troops to Chollet: General Ligonier marched alſo with an army towards Vihiers. But too weak to ſtem the torrent, theſe troops only ſerved to diſcipline the rebels, in the number of actions and ſkirmiſhes which had taken place, and which were not attended with any deciſive conſequences.

Meanwhile, Breſſuire, more preſſed than ever, implored again the aſſiſtance of her neighbours. The firſt town that flew to her aſſiſtance was Thouars. There was in that town at the time a chief of batallion named Quetineau, who was looked on by the inhabitants as their fellow-citizen; he had obtained leave to quit his regiment,

ment, which was then in the low countries, in order to ſettle ſome family affairs in Thouars. The inhabitants thought it would be politic, conſidering the circumſtances in which they were placed, to chooſe him commander of the National Guard. Knowing alſo the courage of this officer, the choice was unanimouſly aſſented to, and the miniſter of war, to whom a diſpatch was ſent, conferred on Quetineau the rank of Commandant General of the diviſion of Breſſuire. When he reached this town he aſſembled about four thouſand men; but his firſt exploits furniſhed ſufficient proofs of his incapacity *. Frequent ſkirmiſhes, but none deciſive; bravery in both general and ſoldiers, but without any enlarged views, or ſettled plan of operations: ſuch was the mode of conducting this war, and it might readily be perceived at firſt ſight, that the glory of pacifying the Vendée would not fall to the lot of ſo inexperienced a commander.

On the other hand, the inſurrection in the department of the Maine and Loire, aſſumed an

* Quetineau has ſeveral times declared that he had not abilities for a general; but it would have been equally difficult for a more experienced commander to have terminated this war, with an army as badly diſciplined as that of which they had given him the command.

aſpect

aſpect ſtill more ſerious; Cathalineau, Domagne, and Bonchamps, ſkilful and daring leaders, had inſpired their ſoldiers with an enthuſiaſm, which the inſurgents of the diſtrict of Chatillon had not yet felt. The inſurrection alſo increaſed in the Lower Vendée; where Charette, who had for ſome time refuſed to declare in favor of the royal party, at length acceded to the wiſhes of the Vendeans, and took the command. In order to diſcipline his army, he engaged every day in ſlight ſkirmiſhes, the preludes of thoſe bloody battles which have more than once brought France to the very verge of ruin, and inflicted wounds, the ſcars of which will long remain.

Although the plan which I have adopted does not permit me to enter into a minute detail of the events of which I have juſt given a ſhort ſketch, I flatter myſelf that the greater part of my readers will find their curioſity gratified by obſerving in what manner and by what ſteps, a ſpark kindled in a part of the Vendée produced a conflagration which had nearly ſpread over the whole of France.

In

In the courſe of the work, I have already ſtated the cauſes of this civil war; I have ſhewn by what means the firſt inſurrection of 1792 was quelled, and the errors by which it was ſuffered to revive A fatal preſumption plunged the whole of the country into a terrible war, in which it has ſpilled its beſt blood; nor was it conjectured that any Vendean would be daring enough to erect the ſtandard of revolt, after the dreadful examples, and ſevere puniſhments which had been inflicted on the rebels. Here was the miſtake; the fire was only covered with aſhes, and the exploſion was great in proportion to the compreſſion. The firſt blow proceeded from the banks of the Loire, from the town of St. Florent-le-Vieux.

On the 12th of March, 1793, the young men of the neighbouring communes were ordered to aſſemble in the diſtrict of this town, to recruit the republican armies, and to form a part of the levy of three hundred thouſand men. Enraged at this order, they aſſembled with the intention of cauſing it to be revoked, or of diſputing its authority. The adminiſtrators endeavoured to uſe the means of perſuaſion, but their attempts were interrupted by hiſſings. A field-piece which was pointed againſt the mutineers, only ſerved to increaſe their audacity.

The diſorder grew more tumultuous, and the republican commandant having ordered the cannon to be fired, ſeveral of the young men were wounded: This blow ſerved as a ſignal; the inſurgents fell in crowds upon the republicans, and ſeized the field-piece; after putting them to flight, the diſtrict was plundered, the archives were deſtroyed, the aſſignats carried off, and the victorious band paſſed the reſt of the evening in the neighbouring public-houſes, ſinging their triumphs, and ſpending the aſſignats.

The inſurgents diſperſed the next morning, each one taking the road to his own houſe. The inſurrection now ſeemed to have been over, and probably nothing farther would have enſued, if one of the revolted communes, Pin-en-Mauge, had not numbered amongſt its inhabitants, one of thoſe enterpriſing heads and daring minds which ſport with danger, and whoſe proper element ſeems to be that of political ſtorms. Cathelineau who, under the dreſs of a carman, poſſeſſed both elevation of ſentiment and intrepidity of character, no ſooner heard of the affair of St. Florent, than he conceived the project of putting it to advantage, and raiſing the whole of the Vendée. Without calculating the chances of ſo raſh an enterpriſe, without comparing

his

his weak powers with the vaſt reſources of his adverſaries, and without fathoming the depth of the abyſs into which he ſhould plunge his fellow-citizens, this enthuſiaſt traverſed the country, placed himſelf at the head of the malcontents, formed an army, and urged them to reſiſtance. The poſt of Jalais, advantageouſly ſituated upon the heights of a chateau, in an intrenchment defended by a ſix pounder, called the *Miſſionary*, was guarded by a republican detachment of eighty men, who did not in the leaſt expect an attack, when a confuſed noiſe announced the approach of the enemy. The republicans prepared for defence, and fired, but without wounding any perſon; the intrepid Cathelineau, at the head of two hundred men, who compoſed his little army, ordered the quick march. In ten minutes the intrenchment was carried, the patriots put to flight, and their chiefs made priſoners. The enemy ſeized upon the cannon, arms, and ammunition, but this was only a prelude to an engagement of more importance, for without allowing his people time to reſt, Cathelineau left Jalais at noon, and marched towards Chemille, two leagues diſtant from the field of battle. This town was defended by two hundred men and three cul-

verines, and ſeemed out of the reach of a *coup-de-main.*

The enemy, however, continued to advance, while the republicans pointed their artillery, and endeavored to affright the rebels by a well adjuſted fire. Without ſtopping to anſwer them with the piece they had captured at Jalais, the inſurgents fell upon their adverſaries with impetuoſity, and after a combat of half an hour, Chemille was carried by ſtorm. A great number of priſoners, the three culverines, the ammunition, and a part of the muſketry, fell into the hands of the conquerors.

Such was the reſult of the firſt day. The army of Cathelineau, ſo few in number at firſt, was now augmented by a croud of malcontents, who waited only for an opportunity to declare themſelves, and he began to reckon his troops by thouſands.

On the 15th of March, Cathelineau marched upon Chollet; whilſt he was on the point of attacking this town, he was joined by a conſiderable body of men brought from the environs of Maulevrier, and commanded by the celebrated Stofflet.

It

It would have been very difficult for ſo weak a garriſon as that of Chollet to make any long reſiſtance againſt a victorious army, ſo the engagement was ſpeedily terminated. The republicans, routed at the firſt attack, retreated into the town, into which the conquerors entered pell-mell with them. The capture of Chollet, by reviving the reputation of the royaliſt army, provoked the inſurrection of the whole of the Vendée, and the war now aſſumed a different aſpect. Hitherto the government had regarded theſe rebellious movements only as partial diſturbances very eaſy to be ſuppreſſed; but, after this blow, they diſcovered that they had to quell a civil war, which threatened the deſtruction of the State. Independent of the thouſands of recruits which the conquerors gained by this victory, they took a conſiderable quantity of arms and ammunition, and four field pieces with the famous piece Marie-Jeanne. The indefatigable Cathelineau directed his march the following day towards Vitriers, which town was the ſame day evacuated; but the inſurgents took nothing here except a few waggons loaded with the papers of the diſtrict, of which they made cartridges. After ſo many engagements, the Vendeans ſtood in need of a

little

little reſt, and accordingly ſeparated, in order to ſpend the week of Low-Sunday. The different attacks of the republicans had been ineffective to lead them to change their plan; for ſeven hundred men, who left Angiers, to ſcour the country, met with no reſiſtance, and it was therefore hoped that the conflagration would be extinguiſhed without any further effect: but this hope ſoon proved deceitful.

On the 9th of April, the royaliſt army advanced upon Chollet, and, after aſſembling all their forces, marched on the 11th towards Chemille. Four thouſand republicans, poſted in two columns, defended themſelves with the greateſt courage; but, ſurrounded by a ſuperior force, were at length compelled to yield. A thouſand men, captured or diſabled, was the reſult of this victory. Meanwhile, the Vendeans, unable to undertake any further enterprize from their want of powder, were obliged to fall back on Beaupreau, and from thence upon Tiffanges, in order to provide themſelves with powder and recruits. An event fatal for the Republic relieved them from this embarraſſment. General Laroche-Jaquelin had taken at the battle of Aubiers ſeveral barrels of powder, and finding the army at Tiffange, he

ſhared

ſhared with it his ammunition. On the 17th of April, they again marched to Chollet, of which four hundred grenadiers of Saumur had taken poſſeſſion; theſe men, at the ſight of ſo ſuperior a force, ſhut themſelves up in the Chateau of Bois-Grotteau, where they were blockaded by the royaliſts.

Meanwhile, the Government obſerving the daily progreſs of the inſurgents, took vigorous meaſures to cruſh the revolt. A conſiderable army marched towards Vitriers in front of the Vendeans, whilſt another, no leſs formidable, advanced upon Beaupreau to take them in rear. Had theſe meaſures been well executed they would infallibly have rooted out the ſpirit of rebellion; but events of a very different nature were deſtined to take place. On the nineteenth the royaliſts diſcovered their enemies advancing upon them in the beſt order poſſible, on the ſide of Vitriers. Cathelineau on this drew up his troops, and fell upon the republicans with an intrepidity which aſtoniſhed them: they nevertheleſs remained firm, and defended themſelves with bravery; but ſurrounded on all ſides, attacked in front, flank, and rear, they were obliged at length to fly. The enemy purſued, and made a great ſlaughter.

All

All their artillery and ammunition fell into the hands of the conquerors, and at the concluſion of the engagement, the garriſon of Bois-Grotteau was obliged to ſurrender priſoners of war.

During this time, the ſecond republican army was making conſiderable progreſs on the ſide of Beaupreau; detachments occupied Chemillé, St. Florent, and Mont-Reveau, when Cathelineau, collecting his troops, arrived on the 23d of April, at Beaupreau, and offered battle to the enemy. The republicans fought with courage, but their bravery could have no effect on men, who fearing no danger, threw themſelves headlong upon their cannons and bayonets. They were forced to give way, and, purſued by the enemy, were compelled to croſs the Loire, leaving the inſurgents in poſſeſſion of ſix pieces of cannon, and ſeveral waggons loaded with gun powder: a loſs the more fatal, as it furniſhed the Vendeans with new means of triumph. The ſucceſs of this day at Beaupreau, led the conquerors to ſuppoſe that they were invincible, and ſpread ſuch a conſternation among the vanquiſhed, that for four months, they did not dare to advance into the country. After this victory, the royaliſts returned

returned to their homes. On the 26th they received orders to muſter at Chollet, which was the place of rendezvous for the projected expedition againſt Breſſuire, Argenton, and Thouars, the ſucceſs of which will be ſhown in the following pages. I ſhall finiſh this digreſſion, by obſerving that the Generals Bonchamps and D'Elbée firſt carried arms in the Vendée, at the affair of Chemillé, on the 11th of April, 1793, and that Cathelineau was mortally wounded at the ſiege of Nantes.

CHAPTER IV.

CAMPAIGN OF 1793. (APRIL 25).

WE have now reached the Spring of 1793, a year that will be ever regarded in the annals of France, as one of the moſt diſaſtrous epochas of its empire.

I have before mentioned, that Bonchamps, Domagné, and other chiefs had, as it were, organiſed and diſciplined their troops in the various ſkirmiſhes, of which Vitriers, Chollet, and Coron had been the theatre, and where the firſt engagements had taken place. Bonchamps had become maſter of Chollet, and marched againſt Ligonier, who, defeated in ſeveral engagements, was obliged to retreat towards Doué. Preſſed on all ſides, and too weak to contend with the inſurgents, he ordered Quetineau to join him with his army. Inſtead of taking the road, which, though

though the longeſt, was the moſt ſafe, Quetineau, in obedience no doubt to the order of his general, ventured to croſs the enemy's country. He accordingly directed his march towards Aubiers, but was attacked unawares in this village by a body of the rebels, and his army thrown into confuſion.

Quetineau performed prodigies of valour, and fought as a private ſoldier; his valour was uſeleſs, his orders were no longer obeyed, and the rout became general. The fate of his army would have been decided, had not a few regular troops formed themſelves into a ſquare battalion on the field of battle, and ſuſtained the fire of the enemy, until the fugitives had found ſhelter in Breſſuire. This victory of Aubiers, which ſpirited up the Vendeans and gave them freſh courage, was only the prelude of thoſe more brilliant actions which raiſed the Vendée to the pinnacle of its greatneſs, but which, by exaggerating its hopes, haſtened its ruin. Laroche-Jaquelin, a celebrated chieftain of whom we ſhall hereafter have occaſion to ſpeak, carried arms for the firſt time in this engagement. Meanwhile Quetineau, haraſſed, diſcouraged, continually contradicted and even inſulted by an undiſciplined troop of Marſeillais who had joined him at Breſſuire,

after the defeat of Aubiers, and fearing that he ſhould be blocked up in a town that was open and defenceleſs, reſolved to evacuate this weak poſt, and retreat to Thouars. This town, built upon a hill, almoſt entirely ſurrounded by the river of Thoué, formed a military poſt, one of the beſt in the whole of the Vendée*. It was a wiſe meaſure in Quetineau to take poſſeſſion of this place, and he had juſt time ſufficient to put his plan in execution; for the day after he left Breſſuire, it was taken by twenty-five thouſand of the enemy; Argenton ſurrendered alſo the next day, and

* There is not a town in *ci-devant* Poitou, more capable of being fortified, and whoſe poſition is ſo ſtrong as that of Thouars. Situated on a hill commanded by no ſuperior height, it is watered by the Thoué, which is fordable only in one place, and running in a crooked direction, defends the ſouthern and weſtern ſides. This ancient town was formerly regarded as the key of Anjou and Poitou. We read in the annals of Nicholas Gilles, that the famous Pepin, during the war againſt Gaifré, duke of Aquitain, choſe the town of Thouars, at that time known by the name of Theodad, as his depôt. It ſuſtained a year's ſiege againſt the famous Du Gueſclin, and what will ſufficiently ſhew the importance attached to the capture of this place, is that the old king Edward III. who had received with indifference the account of the ſurrender of Niort, Saint-Moiſent, Fontenay, and even Poitiers, the inſtant he was informed of this place being beſieged, flew to its aſſiſtance with eighty ſhips.

the

the greater part of the garriſon was maſſacred. In ſhort, on the 5th of May, the Vendean army, reinforced by more than ten thouſand men, and commanded by Bonchamps, D'Elbée, Laroche-Jaqueline, and Leſcures, whoſe preſence inſpired them with freſh ardor, boldly advanced towards Thouars. In the liſt of their chiefs was the celebrated Stofflet, whom capricious fortune had raiſed from the ſituation of game-keeper, to the civil and military command of a province. Never had the Vendeans, ſince the commencement of the war, ſeen any army ſo numerous, nor ſo well ſupplied with arms and artillery. The enemy could enter Thouars only by two bridges, which were ordered to be cut, and by a ford, ſituated below the village of Verine. Quetineau had occupied this poſt with the beſt of his troops, and the remainder of his army was drawn up in line of battle, about the diſtance of a cannon ſhot from the walls of the town. His army was compoſed of about ſix thouſand men, all determined to perform their duty: the event of the battle evinced the folly of his arrangement. At ſix o'clock in the morning, Thouars was attacked, and a numerous column of the Vendeans advanced to the above-mentioned ford. The republicans reſiſted ſucceſsfully this attack,

and

and would without doubt have maintained the poſt, had they received timely aſſiſtance, and likewiſe if the cavalry of Bonchamps had not ſwam acroſs the river, and taken them in flank. This movement threw the patriotic party into confuſion, and nearly half of them fell at the poſt they had ſo bravely defended. The enemy, maſters of the paſſage, puſhed forward to the walls, whilſt Stofflet by a falſe attack on the new bridge, kept in check a part of Quetineau's force. This general diſplayed more coolneſs on the above occaſion than he did at the battle of Aubiers. Followed by a part of his army, he ſpared the rebels half the road, and a battle enſued, the fate of which hung doubtful for ſeveral hours. At length the Vendeans, who were in much greater numbers, by extending their front, formed a kind of ſemicircle, and hemmed in the republicans, who, preſſed on all ſides, retreated fighting, but were in the end compelled to fly for ſafety into the ramparts of the town. The general had preſerved his courage and coolneſs during the action, but the inſtant he perceived his men falling back on all ſides, he was confuſed, and inſtead of directing the retreat towards Loudun and Poitiers, he gave no orders, but ſhut himſelf up in the town, which was carried by aſſault in about an

an hour after. The general, the army, the artillery, and all the ammunition, fell into the hands of the victors.

Whoever ſhall hereafter write the hiſtory of the Vendée, will no doubt examine whether this general ſold his army to the inſurgent leaders, and will conſider the reaſons for and againſt this charge. This much I will ſay, that the treaſon does not appear to me probable, or at leaſt, if Quetineau did betray his country, he was certainly the moſt ſtupid of all traitors*.

In the Lower Vendée the ſucceſs of the inſurgents was by no means ſo brilliant †. Charette

* If Quetineau betrayed his country, he muſt have been influenced by two motives, either by the hopes of gain, or by the deſire of overturning the Republic, for no perſon after all would become a traitor without a proſpect of benefit. Had the treaſon become ſucceſsful, he ought to have received his reward, or enliſted under the banners of the enemy. Nevertheleſs, the inſtant he eſcaped from the hands of the royaliſts, he preſented himſelf to Santerre, to the military commiſſions, in the midſt of the clubs moſt bent on his deſtruction, demanding above all an examination of his conduct, and delivering himſelf into the hands of his judges. I would aſk any man of honor if this is the conduct of a traitor?

† See Note, No. I.

had

had to contend with a formidable army, which palfied all his efforts. The only exploit of the Vendean army was the capture of Machecoul, and which victory was fullied by the most unexampled cruelty: they bafely maffacred all their prifoners, and fathers of families, who were unarmed, were flaughtered without mercy. This atrocious as well as impolitic conduct, gave this ftruggle the character of a war of extermination*.

Notwithftanding what was afferted at the time by the Jacobins, the leaders in the Upper Vendée were far from imitating fuch horrible conduct. Not a citizen was maffacred, not a woman violated, and in a town taken by ftorm, the Vendeans only took what was neceffary for their fubfiftence, and committed no excefs, except in the article of wine.

Charrette, in the mean time, clofely preffed by the republican army which was poſted at Fontenay, dared not undertake any meafure of conſequence, but immediately on hearing of the fuccefs of the battle of Thouars, requefted the chiefs of the Upper Vendée to come to his affiftance. Thefe, therefore,

* See Note, No. II.

commenced

commenced their march and directed their courſe towards Parthenay, the gates of which town were thrown open to them; the next day, they marched to Chataignerie, where four thouſand republicans determined to await them, but who overwhelmed by ſuperior forces, had ſoon reaſon to repent their temerity. The next day, the conquerors were joined by Charrette, and both armies marched againſt Fontenay. Here the engagement was renewed; the republicans though inferior in numbers, but having the advantage of poſition, drove back the inſurgents, and attacking them both in front and on their flanks, gained in the ſpace of two hours a complete victory. The Vendeans, panic ſtruck, fled on all ſides in diſorder; a ſingle officer, by a prodigious effort, ſaved two pieces of cannon; the reſt of the artillery fell into the hands of the conquerors. This defeat, however, inſtead of abating, only ſerved to inflame the courage of their principal leaders, and in a few days, Leſcures, Laroche-Jaquelin, Bonchamps, and other chiefs, again appeared with an army under the walls of Fontenay. The republicans fought deſperately, but the Vendeans oppoſing them with equal fury, victory at length crowned their efforts. Fontenay *

* See Note, No. III.

was taken, a great part of the patriotic army was ſurrounded, and all its artillery and ammunition fell into the hands of the rebels. France now ſaw for the firſt time, that ſhe had an enemy in the Vendée more formidable than the greater part of the coaleſced powers.

The capture of Fontenay ſpread terror through the capital, and the Convention even ſent their grenadiers to oppoſe the rebels, who, taking advantage of the victory, marched immediately towards Niort. The capture of this place was attended with the moſt alarming conſequences, for the inſurrection might not only ſpread through the interior provinces, but the communication with Rochelle and Rochefort was entirely cut off; and the Engliſh might have attacked theſe two ports with impunity*. The inſurgents meanwhile were not more than two leagues diſtant from Niort, the fall of which ſeemed to be inevitable, when it was ſaved by one of thoſe incidents which although common in war, ſo completely baffle all calculations, that the moſt experienced agree to give them the name of Fortune.

On leaving Thouars, D'Elbée had been created

* See Note, No. IV.

Generaliſſimo*, and to bring order out of confuſion, he appointed perſons with the titles of commanders of cantonments. A few days after the departure of the Vendean army, a body of three thouſand men, commanded by General Salomon, arrived at Thouars, from whence his numerous detachments ſpread themſelves over the inſurgent country, and cauſed univerſal alarm. In order to check theſe advanced parties, the commandant of Argenton had collected a body of two thouſand Vendeans at La Fougereuſe and expected every day to be attacked; but finding that the enemy remained quietly at their poſt, and beginning to experience a ſcarcity of proviſions, he was obliged to diſband this weak army: keeping with him about four hundred men, the greater part of whom were armed only with pikes†. General Salomon,

* The firſt perſon on whom this title was conferred, was Cathelineau, a waggoner of Pin-en-mange, near Saint Florent.

† Carra for a long time inſiſted that the pike was ſuperior to the fuſil, and ſaid the latter was merely a kind of perfected ſling. Delighted with this paradox, the Jacobin government expended millions of livres on the manufacture of theſe arms, which ſoon fell into diſgrace; they were then piled up in the magazines, and ſerved for the ſoldiers to laugh at. The Vendean chiefs took ſome thouſands of them, and not having a ſufficient quantity of muſkets, armed a part of the inſurgents.

informed of this circumſtance by his ſpies, fell on a ſudden upon La Fougereuſe, and, after a ſlight ſkirmiſh, took it. The commandant of Argenton, fearing the conqueror would take advantage of his victory to fall upon Chatillon, diſpatched meſſenger after meſſenger to the generaliſſimo to demand ſpeedy aſſiſtance. On the other hand, news arriving that Ligonnier, who was poſted at Doué, was making daily incurſions upon Vitriers, and menacing Chollet, D'Elbée ſummoned a council, in which it was reſolved to abandon the conqueſt of Niort, and go to the relief of the invaded country. The general rendezvous was accordingly fixed at Chatillon, and the army was diſbanded.

A few days after, fifty thouſand men, with the moſt intrepid of the leaders at their head, marched from Chatillon, and directed their courſe towards Doué. Ligonnier ſeeing the ſtorm ready to burſt upon him, demanded ſuccours from the republican army poſted at Saumur; and full of confidence determined to try the chance of arms; but completely defeated, he was left to repent the precipitation into which his courage had drawn him. The next day, the victorious army bent its courſe towards Saumur.

This

This celebrated town, independant of the advantage of its ſituation, was defended by a very numerous army, partly compoſed of the battalions and troops of the line, the greater part of whom had never been engaged with the Vendeans, and who, full of confidence, were anxious to cope with them. Some of their generals were men of talents, but the greater number were choſen from the Jacobin club, and better fitted for making motions, than facing an enemy. A few ineffective plans were, however, combined, ſome fortifications haſtily raiſed, and advantageous poſts were taken, and the diviſion of General Salomon was ordered to the relief of the menaced town. This tardy meaſure was attended with the moſt diſaſtrous conſequences. The Vendeans hearing of Salomon's march, detached a part of their forces to Montreuil, and advanced with the remainder upon Saumur. Deceived by the incorrect accounts of his ſpies, the general fell into the centre of the Vendean column, and after fighting three hours, left the half of his army on the field of battle, and the reſt eſcaped under cover of the night to Thouars.

Meanwhile the two armies were fighting with the greateſt fury before Saumur, and the Vendeans,

deans, thrice repulſed, as often returned to the charge. It was at this battle that men armed only with heavy bludgeons, were ſeen ruſhing with fury upon the cannon, and ſeizing them. The republicans, broke, formed inſtantly again, and preſented a rampart of bayonets to the enemy: a regiment of cuiraſſeurs was advancing with impetuoſity upon the rebels, when, attacked in flank by a body of men under Domagné, they were forced to retreat. The victory remained doubtful, until the Vendeans, learning the iſſue of the battle of Montreuil, and reinforced by that army, made another charge, which decided the battle in their favour. The republicans, preſſed on all ſides, retreated into Saumur, but the diſorder became ſo general, that the place was taken*.

Few battles have been more bloody than this of Saumur; the two armies fought with the greateſt fury, and the Vendean chiefs ſignalized themſelves by prodigies of valor. Leſcures was wounded in leading his troops to the charge, and Domagné was killed in repulſing the cuiraſ-

* See Note, No. V.

ſicers.

ſiers. While they were yet fighting at the entrance of the town, the intrepid Laroche-Jaquelin, hurried on by his impetuoſity, and accompanied only by one officer, penetrated into the grand ſquare of Saumur.

Where is the Frenchman who would not have gloried in thoſe heroic actions, if they had been directed againſt the common enemy, againſt the foreigners who at that time were marching to invade our country? Alcibiades and Coriolanus among the ancients, and Walſtein and Condé in modern times, have fought againſt their country, but the hiſtorian, whilſt he condemns their errors, renders juſtice to their valorous deeds.

The Vendeans obtained by the victory of Saumur, a conſiderable quantity of artillery and ammunition, as well as high reputation*. It was aſſerted at the time, that if the victorious army had taken the route to Paris, they might have gained poſſeſſion of it, and changed the government. I leave the deciſion of that queſtion to military men, obſerving only that it was never

* See Note, No. VI.

my

my opinion*. However that may be, this victory raiſed the Vendée to the higheſt pitch of glory. A few days after this battle, Angers threw open its gates; the example of this town was followed by all the towns ſituated on the Loire; and this torrent would have overwhelmed the whole of the weſtern provinces of France, had not Nantes oppoſed a barrier, againſt which all its efforts were unavailing.

This town, advantageouſly ſituated, had a numerous garriſon and an able general to defend it. Canclaux, learning experience by the defeat at Saumur, inſtead of truſting to the chance of a battle, prudently kept himſelf within the ramparts. From a lofty dome he ſaw at one glance the preparations of the enemy, their different points of attack, and by the ſuccours which he diſpatched, he ſucceeded in rendering all their efforts uſeleſs. This wiſe conduct obtained its

* When we reflect on the internal reſources of Paris, the vicinity of the army of the North, the great number of national guards, added to the difficulties which an undiſciplined army, without proviſions or ammunition, would meet with on the road, we muſt agree that under all theſe circumſtances, the taking of the capital was highly improbable.

deſired

desired success. The Vendean army, excellent for a *coup-de-main*, understood nothing about sieges; besides, not having sufficient artillery, ammunition, and provisions, they were unable to remain for any length of time in the same camp. They had also another disadvantage; Charrette posted with twenty thousand men on the other side of the Loire, and stopped by a numerous train of artillery placed upon a bridge at about half a league distance, was unable to form his junction, and was consequently useless. Notwithstanding all these obstacles, the Vendeans by mere impetuosity had carried part of the suburbs, when they were obliged to fly to the defence of the country behind them, which was attacked by General Westermann. This event, and the prudence of General Canclaux, preserved a city to France, the capture of which would have been attended with the most fatal consequences. I shall speak more at length of Westermann's expedition hereafter.

After the battle of Saumur, Lescures, who was wounded, retired to his house at Cliffon; some hostile movements, however, had called him again to the field and led him to forget his wounds. After meeting with a few checks, he reached Parthenay with ten thousand men. Wes-

termann was then at St. Maixent with a diviſion, the flower of which were drawn from the Northern legion. This daring general, confiding in his courage, undertook to ſurpriſe the enemy in Parthenay, which, in ſpite of the vigilance of Leſcures, perfectly ſucceeded. The inſurgents, attacked during the night, made but a feeble reſiſtance, and fled in diſorder. Leſcures himſelf owed his eſcape to the darkneſs of the night. This ſucceſs gave freſh ſpirits to Weſtermann, who was certainly more dreaded by the rebels than any of the other generals, and who in fact did them the moſt miſchief. He had that kind of valour, which was ſuited to this war. Inſtead of meditating plans, or digeſting projects, he took no other counſellor than opportunity; and juſtified the revolutionary axiom, that every thing conſiſts in daring exertions.

Leſcures, having withdrawn to his eſtate, endeavoured in vain to collect his ſcattered forces, but Weſtermann would not allow him time to breathe. The next morning, he appeared under the walls of his chateau, and it was not till two days after, that, by the light of the flames which were conſuming his poſſeſſions, he at length aſſembled ſix thouſand men at Chatillon. The republican

republican General meanwhile marched againſt this town, and Leſcures flew to its aſſiſtance. The two parties aſſembled upon a height, called *le Bois du Moulin aux Chèvres*. The Vendeans ſuſtained the firſt attack of the enemy, but Weſtermann, followed by his cavalry, ſpread every where confuſion and death. The Vendeans having fled on all ſides, the conqueror entered Chatilſon in triumph While this General was meditating new conqueſts, he was informed that Laroche-Jaquelin was in fight with an army: he treated, however, theſe reports with contempt, until the ſound of the cannon convinced him of their reality. In vain he ſummoned up his courage; the Vendeans fell with fury on the Republicans, who thrown into diſorder and preſſed on all ſides, took flight. The daring Weſtermann was compelled to put ſpurs to his horſe, and eſcape from the place which he had the ſame evening triumphantly entered. The two wings of his army remained on the field of battle, or were made priſoners*.

Such was the iſſue of an enterpriſe, which had been planned in oppoſition to all received military

* See Note, No. VII.

maxims, and which occaſioned to France the loſs of multitudes of brave men: it was attended however with two very conſiderable advantages: the firſt was, that it made a powerful diverſion, and brought up an army from Brittany which would have ravaged the country; and ſecondly, it opened to the Republicans the road to Chatillon, and abated ſomewhat of the extravagant hopes, and leſſened the preſumption of the enemy.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER V.

CONTINUATION OF THE CAMPAIGN OF 1793.

FORTUNE was equally propitious to the inſurgents in the Lower Vendée. Charrette had ſeveral times defeated the diviſions commanded by Beyſſer and Sandoz, but theſe reverſes had not in the leaſt damped the courage of the republicans*. As no place of importance had been the fruit of theſe victories, Charrette, to give eclat to his party, advanced againſt the town of Sables, which, defended by a brave garriſon, reſiſted all his efforts, and of which, after ſeveral uſeleſs attacks, he was obliged to raiſe the ſiege. To repair this diſgrace, he reſolved to give battle

* The reader will perceive that I do not enter into ſo preciſe a detail of the operations of Charrette, as of the chiefs of the Upper Vendée. I will frankly declare, I have not ſufficient documents of this army of the inſurgents to allow me to enter at length into its hiſtory.

to

to the republican army encamped at Luçon. Situated in the midſt of marſhes, and defended by an army, this town appeared to him no eaſy conqueſt. In order, therefore, not to expoſe himſelf to another repulſe, he requeſted the aſſiſtance of the neighbouring armies. Sapineau, who commanded what the Vendeans termed the centre, and who had gained ſome advantages on his ſide, marched to his aſſiſtance with a choſen body of men, more brave, however, than numerous, and Laroche-Jaquelin alſo joined him with a detachment of twelve thouſand men. Theſe united forces marched towards Luçon, and engaged the republicans. Charrette defeated the wing which was oppoſed to him, and victory ſeemed aſſured to the Vendeans, when two incidents turned it in favour of the patriots. The firſt was the ſkill and good conduct of the brave Leconte, commander of the third battallion of Deux Sèvres, who being ſurrounded by the rebels, formed his troops into a ſquare, remained more than an hour expoſed to the fire of the enemy, and gave time to the remainder of the army to relieve him, and recommence the battle. The other was the panic which diſplayed itſelf among the troops commanded by Laroche-Jaquelin, who, without being puſhed by the enemy, fled, and diſperſed themſelves.

themſelves. The General, hurried away by the fugitives, found himſelf obliged to abandon the field of battle, and a victory which had appeared decided.

If we may believe the Vendean chiefs, the cauſe of this ſudden terror was a popular tradition, which I think beneath the dignity of an hiſtorian to record.

Aſhamed of the precipitate flight of the grand army, the title by which the diviſions of Chatillon and Chollet were then known, Charrette retired in a ſtate of deſpondency, with the moſt profound contempt for ſuch marks of genuine cowardice. The rivalſhip which began to riſe in his mind againſt his colleagues, took deeper root, and attributing to their jealouſy what was only the effect of terror, he never forgave them for this defeat.

Meanwhile Laroche-Jaquelin, who had fallen back on Chatillon, met with freſh reverſes. A new republican army formed of the remains of that of Saumur, and of troops arrived from the North, had regained Saumur, Angers, and all the

the towns which had been taken by the Vendeans*. General Bonchamps had been defeated by the republicans in attempting to oppoſe their progreſs. Laroche-Jaquelin, D'Elbée, and Leſcures, had haſtily collected a body of fifteen thouſand men†, and with theſe, added to the remains of the army of Bonchamps, had marched to meet the enemy, who had advanced as far as Martigné Briant. The principal ſtrength of the Vendean army conſiſted in a body of twelve hundred men, compoſed of ſix hundred Swiſs and Germans, of the Germanic legion, who after the defeat at Saumur, had taken arms in favour of the royaliſts, and of ſix hundred of the braveſt of the Vendeans who had ſerved before in different regiments. This ſelect body rendered the greateſt ſervice to the Vendée, and always continued faithful to its cauſe.

* It was much eaſier for the inſurgents to take towns than to keep them. The inſtant the chiefs ſet off upon any expedition, every ſoldier wiſhed to follow, and it was impoſſible to keep them in garriſon. Although the poſt of Saumur was of the greateſt importance to the Vendeans, and although D'Elbée had left fifteen hundred men to guard it, they were obliged to abandon it five days after its conqueſt, the commandant having found, upon muſter, that he had not more than ſixty men fit to bear arms.

† See Notes, Nos. VIII. and IX.

The

The two armies ſoon came up with each other, near Martigné, and after ſkirmiſhing, began a regular fire which was kept up on both ſides with ſucceſs. The ninth regiment of huſſards made an advance, and Laroche-Jaquelin marched to meet them, at the head of his cavalry. Each party expected to come to cloſe quarters, in which, however, they were diſappointed, as the Vendeans, oppreſſed with heat and thirſt, retired the firſt, and took a poſition at Vitriers, ſituated three leagues from the field of battle. This affair therefore, was looked on as a mere ſkirmiſh. Laroche-Jaquelin and the other chiefs, had promiſed Charrette to meet him the next day on the banks of the Sèvre, to conſult with him on the means of repairing the check at Luçon.

Not thinking the enemy intended another attack, they ſet off, and promiſed the ſoldiers that they would haſten their return, but deſired them not to give battle to the enemy in their abſence This imprudence had nearly been attended with the moſt fatal conſequences to the Vendée; for the patriots having learnt that the principal leaders of the enemy were abſent, advanced rapidly upon Vitriers, and ſuddenly attacked the affrighted royaliſts, who would have been inevitably cut off, had

not Keſter, the German whom I have mentioned, taken upon himſelf the command. With a ſelect corps which he headed, he threw himſelf in the way of the enemy who was rapidly advancing, and by means of a well ſupported and well directed fire, kept them in check. The example of this brave man encouraged the Vendeans, and they ruſhed with furious yells upon the republican columns, which, badly poſted, and having little extent of front, fought to great diſadvantage. At length, after two hours of alternate ſucceſs and defeat, victory declared in favour of the Vendean army. Few routs were ever more compleat; ten pieces of cannon, all the covered waggons and baggage fell into the hands of the enemy. The republican general, cloſely purſued by a daring fellow, named Loiſeau, eſcaped only by ſcaling a wall eight feet high; ſuch was the ſucceſs of the battle of Vitriers, one of the moſt complete that the inſurgents had yet gained. The royaliſt chiefs, on hearing the report of the cannon, haſtened their return, but reached the ſpot only to be witneſſes of the victory. This ſucceſs rendered the Vendeans for ſeveral months maſters of the country, and this was almoſt the only advantage which they derived from it.

Meanwhile

Meanwhile Charrette waited impatiently with his troops for the ſuccours which had been promiſed him. Laroche-Jaquelin, Leſcures, and D'Elbée ſoon joined him with a body of more than twenty thouſand men, and they all marched towards Luçon. The republicans, elevated by their firſt ſucceſs, flew to engage them. At the firſt onſet, the grand Vendean army was again ſeized with the ſame panic, and the greater part of the royaliſts fled without even ſeeing the enemy, and left them a complete victory. This battle, which was fought on the 25th of Auguſt, 1793, was remarkable for an engagement between the Vendean cavalry and the ninth regiment of huſſars, who repulſed the inſurgents. The Vendeans, however, were ſo little galled in their retreat, that they formed their camp at three leagues from the field of battle, from whence, five days afterwards, they marched to try their fortune for the third time; after a battle of two hours, the royaliſts were completely routed, and ſoon diſcovered that Luçon, defended by the courage of republicans, and not leſs by the defection of their panic-ſtruck warriors, was become impregnable.

The republicans, after this decisive victory, scoured the enemy's country, and after having searched in vain for Charrette, took post at Chantonnay. Charrette, closely pursued, was again obliged to have recourse to his neighbours. The council of Chatillon assembled, and their opinions were for some time divided : at length, it was agreed that D'Elbée and Laroche-Jacquelin should march an army to the relief of Charrette, whilst Lescures, with a division, guarded the district of Chatillon. This project was put into execution : on the fourth of September, D'Elbée advanced towards the Lower Vendée, formed a junction with Charrette, and after a few days march, came within view of the enemy. So often witnesses of the cowardice of their adversaries, the republicans prepared themselves only for a feeble attack, and considered their victory as decisive. But the panic which had seized the royalists at Chantonnay had subsided : the fugitives of Luçon had recovered their spirits, and rushing with fury upon the enemy, overthrew them in every direction. The republicans, surprised * and indignant, were put to flight,

* The Vendeans owed their victory to a mistake of the republican General, who so little expected to be attacked, that he

flight, and obliged to abandon a victory which, at first sight, seemed secure*.

While this engagement was taking place at Chantonnay, Lescures, posted in the Upper Vendée, did not remain idle. At the head of a division, he continually harrassed his adversaries, and sometimes threatened Parthenay, and at other times Airvault and Thouars.

General Rey occupied Airvault with a kind of flying camp, and knowing that Lescures was posted at Saint Loup, marched to meet him. For two hours, each side kept up a brisk cannonade; but the insurgents at length having expended their powder, their courage forsook them, and they abandoned the field, strewed more with wooden shoes than killed and wounded†.

Meantime, the representatives of the people who accompanied the army of the West, anxious,

he was at the same time at some distance from his camp: his army was therefore surprised, but not one of the soldiers took to flight, until they had expended all their cartridges.

* See Note, No. X.

† See Note, No. XI.

whatever

whatever it might coſt, to put an end to this civil war, had taken what they then termed a grand meaſure, but which ought rather to have been called a falſe and fooliſh one. Preſuming that nothing was ſo fitted to cruſh the maſs of inſurgents as to bring againſt it a maſs of people ſtill more numerous, they had ſummoned from ſeveral neighbouring departments all men from the age of eighteen to fifty*. Such a maſs, badly armed, and ſtill more badly diſciplined, could not be of the leaſt utility. In conſequence of the orders of theſe repreſentatives, ſixty thouſand men aſſembled at Thouars; when Leſcures on receiving intelligence, conceived the daring project of diſſipating this undiſciplined rabble, and even propoſed to effect it with two thouſand men.

By a ſkilful maneuvre, he directed his column towards Airvault, which General Rey, uncertain of the real point of attack, and not daring to quit, had taken meaſures to defend. On a ſudden, Leſcures wheeled off towards Thouars, and before night, was within two leagues of this town*,

* See Note, No. XII.

† This attack took place the 14th September, 1793.

which

which would have been taken, if he could have perſuaded the Vendeans to have made an immediate attack; but as among the prejudices of theſe people is this, that nothing ought to be undertaken in darkneſs, there was no means of making them march forwards, and this delay ſaved the town.

During theſe operations Leſcures was informed that a reinforcement of four thouſand men was rapidly advancing, and had already reached Aubiers. Inſtead of waiting the arrival of theſe ſuccours, the General, convinced that the ſucceſs of his enterprize depended entirely on the rapidity with which it was executed, advanced at break of day upon Thouars: in leſs than an hour the bridge of Verine was carried, and the plain covered with fugitives. Thouars would have fallen a ſecond time into the hands of the inſurgents, had not General Rey, who had received news of its danger the preceding evening, ſuddenly appeared with a diviſion of regular troops. The ſight of this ſecond army determined Leſcures to fall back, which he did before the enemy, and made the only orderly retreat the Vendeans had yet effected. A piece of cannon, and a few priſoners were the only fruits of the victory. Leſcures, however, gained

gained two advantages from his defeat; the firſt was the breaking up of the maſs which threatened the Vendée, and the ſecond, inſpiring his ſoldiers with freſh courage.

So many battles loſt or won, had diſciplined the Vendeans to ſuch a point that I do not think I affirm too much, in ſaying, that they would have been invincible, had they been led againſt any other enemy.

The Dutch who had reſiſted all the efforts of Philip II. and the Americans who ſhook off the Engliſh yoke, with infinitely greater means, never diſplayed ſo much courage and perſeverance. But if the Vendeans on the one ſide performed prodigies of valour, the French diſplayed more energy and created more reſources than either the Engliſh or Spaniards. If twenty thouſand men were ſlain in one battle, forty thouſand, no leſs, diſciplined, immediately took their place, and theſe in their turn were ſucceeded by a ſtill greater number, riſing in proportion to the loſs.

An event, which at firſt ſight did not appear in any degree to intereſt the Vendée, was, however,

ever, the cauſe of its ruin. Mentz and Valenciennes having ſurrendered to the coaleſced powers, the convention, by a decree, ordered the garriſons of theſe towns to march into the Vendée. Several corps had already been drafted from the army of the North, of which twenty-five batallions had been formed under the name of *la formation d'Orleans*; theſe troops, though diſciplined, had not been able to terminate the diſpute. In the hopes that the ſoldiers of thoſe garriſons would be more ſucceſsful, they were ſent down in carriages by poſt horſes, for greater expedition, from Paris, and the cauſe of the Republic was, as it were, entruſted to the courage and patriotiſm of theſe new champions.

The repreſentatives of the people and the generals were at length convinced of the abſurdity of raiſing the people *en maſſe*, and, after various deliberations, had agreed to act upon a new and better formed plan, the execution of which could not fail of being attended with complete ſucceſs. Two armies, compoſed of the heroes of Mentz, of ſoldiers of the North, and old troops, were ordered to attack Charrette, on two points at the ſame time, and purſue him as far as Chollet; whilſt another army, commanded by General Chalbos, was ap-

pointed to march into the midſt of the Upper Vendée, attack and carry Chatillon, and effect their junction with the two other armies. Several flying camps were to make diverſions, harraſs the enemy, and favor the march of the armies. To intimidate the Vendeans, the army was provided with howitzers, a ſpecies of artillery ſo much the more terrible to the enemy, as they were entirely ignorant of its effect. I ought here to remark, that the Vendean artillery, though badly ſerved, had a great ſuperiority over that of the republicans. The inſurgents marching continually, and fighting like light infantry, were but very little incommoded by the field pieces, while the republican troops, marching in columns and fighting in cloſe ranks, had often whole fields ſwept away by a ſingle diſcharge. This circumſtance gave the Vendeans alſo a great advantage in the uſe of their muſketry; the file and platoon firing of their adverſaries killed very few of their men, whilſt their muſkets loaded with four and five balls, and levelled at the object, made dreadful havoc in the cloſe ranks of their enemies.

Theſe well planned projects would have inſured the conqueſt of the Vendée; which would have been

been loſt without reſource had all the wheels of ſo vaſt and complicated a machine been put in motion at the ſame time.

It was about this time, that the Engliſh, who were anxious to add fuel to this dreadful conflagration, and who rejoiced at our calamities, diſpatched an emiſſary to Chatillon. Preſented to the civil tribunal, formed by the Vendean Generals, and known under the name of the Superior Council, he offered them, in the name of the Engliſh Government, both men and money. I have been informed by one of thoſe who was preſent at this Council, that a great number of its members were averſe to the project of receiving the Engliſh. Love for their country, and national hatred towards their ancient enemies, had yet ſome influence on their minds, and they returned vague anſwers to the emiſſary, without any poſitive aſſurances*.

Meantime the plan which we have mentioned, began to be put into execution. The republican forces marched in two columns againſt Charrette, defeated him in two or three ſkirmiſhes, and took

‡ See Note, No. XIII.

from him all his artillery; in a word, they obliged him to fly the country, accompanied by twelve thouſand diſarmed and diſcouraged followers.

Charrette, like a ſkilful commander, directed his retreat towards the Upper Vendée, which had not yet been attacked, and, having taken poſt at Tiffanges, ſent courier after courier to the Superior Council, to give them notice of his ſituation, and to demand inſtant aſſiſtance. Thirty thouſand men, commanded by Leſcures, Laroche-Jaquelin, and D'Elbée, joined him in his camp. The ſame day, they were informed that the diviſion from Mentz, commanded by Kleber, ardent in the purſuit of Charrette, was poſted at Torfou. The combined forces of the Vendeans marched towards this diviſion, but found it drawn up in admirable order. The two armies remained facing each other, and making their reſpective obſervations; the Mayençais had hitherto fought only with Charrette, and thought that he was the only enemy they had to contend with. At the ſight of theſe new uniforms which they had never ſeen*, they felt the ſame ſort of ſurprize as Aſdrubal

* In order for the reader to comprehend this paſſage,

Aſdrubal at the ſight of the old bucklers of the army of Nero. The preſence, however, of this reinforcement did not abate their courage, for after a few ſkirmiſhes, they began the attack, and made ſuch a vigorous onſet, that at the firſt ſhock, the Vendean army was thrown into diſorder, and ſome of the troops took to immediate flight. This battle would have decided the fate of the Vendée, had not Leſeures and the other generals, who well knew the importance of this day, alighted from their horſes, ſeized muſkets and placed themſerves at the head of the French company. Thus armed and ſeconded by a handful of intrepid followers, they ſupported the enemies ſhock, and by this manuvre concealed a part of the diſorder of their army. Meanwhile the Vendean cavalry had rallied the fugitives, who, finding they were not purſued, took courage and advanced with reſolution againſt the enemy. For more than ſeven hours the victory which was warmly diſputed hung doubtful; at length, the Mayençais, almoſt ſurrounded, decided on withdrawing from the field, which they effected in good order, preſenting

he ſhould be informed, that the ſoldiers of Charrette wore uniforms of a brown colour, and thoſe of the Upper Vendée of a grey blue.

at

at times a formidable front to the enemy. The Vendeans, little accuſtomed to ſuch kinds of retreat, followed ardent in the purſuit, but without making any impreſſion. A diviſion attempted in vain to cut off their retreat; three times they were charged by the Vendean cavalry, who were as often driven back, and the braveſt of the aſſaillants made to repent their temerity. For nearly ſix leagues, the fight was kept up without retarding in the leaſt the retreat of the Mayençais; at length they reached a bridge upon the Sèvre, near Cliſſon, and having planted on it two pieces of cannon, they compelled their purſuers to retreat in their turn.

Such was the reſult of the celebrated battle of Torfou, which coſt the Mayençais much blood, but whoſe valour and addreſs excited the admiration even of their enemies. I have heard ſeveral Vendeans ſpeak with enthuſiaſm and reſpect of this army, and regret the loſs of ſo many brave men with a ſentiment of grief and admiration. The Vendeans this day took ſeveral pieces of cannon, and a great quantity of ammunition; but the greateſt advantage which they reaped from it, was that of raiſing the courage of their terrified partiſans: the plan which the patriots had ſo wiſely combined

combined was alſo overthrown by this event, which had nearly proved fatal to the republican cauſe.

The victorious army lay that night at Tiffanges, where a council of war was held, and in which the Vendean chiefs, particularly Leſcures, after commenting on the courage and ſkill of the Mayençais, declared their opinion, that this army would one day prove the ruin of the Vendée, and that therefore they ought not to heſitate a moment in extirpating a corps, which ſingly had been more formidable to them than all the battles of their other adverſaries. To inſure ſucceſs, they diſpatched a courier to Bonchamps, who was ſtationed near Chollet with a body of eight thouſand men, and ordered him to march on the 21ſt towards Cliſſon, and attack the Mayençais in rear, whilſt they themſelves, with their whole force, attacked them in front.

Had this plan been put in execution, there is reaſon to believe, that in ſpite of their bravery, the Mayençais would have been totally deſtroyed*; but an incident deranged all theſe projects which

† See Note, No. XIV.

had

had been combined according to all the rules of war, and which caused the plan for the ruin of the army of Mentz to turn to its advantage. On the 20th Charrette received a courier by which he learned that Montaigu had been carried by the republicans, and that another party, posted at St. Fulgent, was ravaging his country. Warmly pressed by his officers and soldiers, he assembled the council again, and declared to the chiefs of the Upper Vendée that he could not join in the expedition of Cliffon, that the interest of his country required his presence, and that he was about to march. Lescures and D'Elbée attempted in vain to show him the ill consequences and danger of such a step; he remained inexorable, and only promised them, that as soon as he had driven the enemy from his country, he would join his forces to their army, and help them to extirpate the Mayençais. Finding it impossible to retain him, and not thinking themselves sufficiently strong to attack so brave and well posted an enemy, the chiefs of the Upper Vendée determined to march to the relief of Montaigu*. The republican army

* The only precaution taken by the generaliſſimo D'Elbée, was to send a counter-order to Bonchamps, the courier of which

army, poſted before this town, was not in ſufficient force to make a ſtand againſt the conquerors of Torfou. A number of ſoldiers who were out plundering, had not even time to rejoin it, and in leſs than half an hour Montaigu was retaken, the republicans were defeated, and their artillery, baggage waggons, and ammunition fell into the hands of the rebels. The carnage in Montaigu was dreadful, and all the priſoners were maſſacred; a part of the army, however, ſucceeded in eſcaping to Nantes.

Of three bodies of troops which had entered the Lower Vendée, one had been vigorouſly repulſed, the ſecond beaten and completely diſperſed, and the third remained poſted at St. Fulgent. This army, if not the moſt formidable, was at leaſt the moſt numerous; and in poſſeſſion of the moſt conſiderable park of artillery, among which were included thoſe dreadful howitzers, the effect of which was unknown to the Vendeans, and on which the republicans founded their hopes of victory.

which was taken and put to death by the republicans; this was the cauſe of the check which Bonchamps received a few days after, as the reader will have occaſion to obſerve.

Previous to the attack of the enemy at St. Fulgent, the Vendean chiefs held a council, and reſolved on meaſures ſo well concerted, that, had they been put in execution, not a tenth part of this army would have eſcaped. Charrette ſent an order to the commandant of Herbiers, to march with his whole diviſion to the four ways, and remain in ambuſcade until the republican army ſhould paſs him; he was then to take them in the rear, while the combined armies attacked them in front and on both flanks. The republicans were indebted to a miſtake for their ſafety, for Charrette had given notice, that the battle would take place in the morning; but from delays unavoidable in ſuch circumſtances, it did not commence until the evening*. The commandant of Herbiers, tired, therefore, of waiting, thought proper to return to his ſtation, and wait for new orders.

At ſun-ſet the two armies came within ſight of each other; ſeveral of the Vendean chiefs

* The battle commenced an hour before ſun-ſet, and laſted the greater part of the night. Although the Vendeans were very much prepoſſeſſed againſt nocturnal combats, in this inſtance they fought with the greateſt courage.

wiſhed

wiſhed to put off the battle until the morrow, but the majority were of a contrary opinion, and were reſolved to take advantage of the ſhort remains of day-light to commence the attack. Emboldened by their two former victories, the Vendean army entertained no doubt of ſucceſs, and the army of their adverſaries, full of confidence in the uſe of their numerous artillery, figured to itſelf a complete triumph. During two hours, each kept up a moſt dreadful fire; but the patriotic army was too diſadvantageouſly poſted, not to feel its fatal effects.

The darkneſs was favourable only to the Vendeans, for the republican cannoneers knew not where to point their pieces, whilſt the Vendeans, poſted at fifty paces from the open camp of the enemy, and concealed behind the hedges, kept up a moſt deſtructive fire of muſketry. The dreadful howitzers, meantime, thundered in every direction, but the rebels, ſcattered about according to their uſual cuſtom, and to uſe their expreſſion, "beating round the buſhes," were not intimidated. They felt, indeed, ſome movements of ſurprize, but it was not attended with any terror, and they continued to fight with their accuſtomed fury. I have heard ſeveral Vendeans who were in the

engagement, and who could not comprehend any thing of the parabolic deſcent of theſe formidable howitzers, ſpeak of thoſe murderous guns, as of an infernal machine, the invention of which was ſomething ſuperhuman. For ſix hours the battle had raged with undiminiſhed fury on both ſides; the confuſion inſeparable from a nocturnal fight, prevailed equally in both armies, but the diſorder was infinitely more detrimental to the republicans than to their enemies, who were never accuſtomed to keep any order, and of whom each one choſe his own poſition. The former, perceiving by the flaſhes of the muſkets that they were nearly ſurrounded, were anxious to make good their retreat. The republican generals did every thing that courage and experience could atchieve to ſtop the diſorder, and renew the engagement; their efforts failed, and the rout became general. The whole of the ammunition, cannon, and even the howitzers, fell into the hands of the conquerors.

The victorious army purſued the enemy cloſely, and made a great ſlaughter of the fugitives: in addition to their bad fortune, the commandant of Herbiers, informed of the engagement by the cannonade,

cannonade, and dreading the reproaches of Charrette, aſſembled with great expedition three hundred cavalry, and reached the four ways half an hour after the action, where he fell upon the ſtragglers, of whom he killed a great number. Such would have been the fate of the whole republican army, had the four thouſand men whom he had placed in ambuſcade the evening before, remained there fifteen hours longer.

After having thus re-eſtabliſhed Charrette, and placed him in a flouriſhing condition, the grand army took leave and returned back to their poſitions, where they did not long enjoy the repoſe they had promiſed themſelves.

The chiefs, on arriving at Chatillon, were informed of the defeat of Bonchamps, and were loaded with the moſt bitter reproaches by this general. The cauſe of this defeat was as follows: we have already ſeen that Leſcures, about to attack the Mayençais at Cliſſon, had invited Bonchamps to make an attack, and take the enemy in rear. Charrette having by his precipitation deranged this plan, a courier had been ſent to Chollet to inform the Vendean general of the new arrangement

ment which had taken place. This courier by accident fell into the hands of a republican party, who conducted him to the Mayençais; and from his examination they were appriſed not only of the march and intention of the enemy, but diſcovered the means of exterminating the army of Bonchamps. The latter, ignorant of the new plans which had been adopted, advanced on the 21ſt to attack the enemy, and not being ſeconded by the army as he expected, was completely defeated. This reverſe, however, excited leſs aſtoniſhment in the council of Chatillon, than the news of the march of General Chalbos towards that town. Different circumſtances had retarded the march of his army; with greater diligence he had prevented the three defeats I have juſt mentioned: this delay, however, muſt not be imputed to Chalbos, an officer of acknowledged merit. If we may credit ſeveral republican officers, the fault was in the repreſentatives of the people, whoſe various arretés was often in direct oppoſition to the plans of the Generals, and occaſioned prejudicial delays*.

This

* Many of the repreſentatives ſent to the army had wiſdom enough not to interfere in matters of which they were ignorant,

This army, diſengaged at length from the ſhackles by which it had been ſo long encumbered, marched upon Chatillon, carrying deſolation and death in its paſſage. It was commanded by three generals, diſtinguiſhed alike by their courage and their talents; theſe were Chalbos, Chabot, and Weſtermann. On the news of this march, Leſcures, D'Elbée, and Laroche-Jaquelin haſtily collected their troops, and, at the head of the conquerors of St. Fulgent, waited for the enemy on the heights of Chatillon, where, after a few ſkirmiſhes, they made diſpoſitions for a general engagement. If I may give credit to what ſeveral of the Vendean chiefs have told me, it was Weſtermann who was commiſſioned to range the troops in order of battle; which operation was confided to him, as he was ſuppoſed to know the ground better than his colleagues. But this he executed very ill, having poſted the republican troops in a valley beneath the heights occupied by the inſurgents; conſequently, during the whole engagement, they fought under great diſadvantage. The action began by a briſk cannonade, but the armies ſoon after coming to

norant, but the greater numbers continually tormented the generals, thwarted their plans, and were in vain reminded of the motto, *Ne ſutor ultra crepidam.*

cloſe

cloſe quarters, a moſt heavy fire of muſquetry ſilenced the cannon. For three hours the victory was uncertain; Chalbos and Chabot did every thing that could be expected from their courage and abilities: but however great might be the bravery of this army, it fell far ſhort of the energy and diſcipline of the Mayençais. Harraſſed by the enemy, they could not ſuſtain a briſk charge from a choſen body of troops commanded by Leſcures and Laroche-Jaquelin; but on finding the right wing ſhaken, and the left entirely broken, they took openly to flight. The conquerors went in purſuit of the enemy, and nothing leſs than a complete victory was expected, when Weſtermann, at the head of a body of reſerve, fell upon the ſcattered rebels, of whom he made a conſiderable havock, and renewed the engagement. Night, however, ſeparated the combatants, and the Vendeans, exhilarated at the advantage they had gained, gave themſelves up to inconſiderate mirth. They had taken ſeveral carriages laden with brandy, which capture was the cauſe of their ruin. Extravagantly fond of ſpirits, they drank to ſuch an exceſs that the greater part of them fell down in a ſtate of intoxication, without any ſenſe or feeling*. The

* This is not the firſt time that a French army has been deſtroyed

chiefs ſtrongly repreſented to them, that the enemy was near, and might ſurpriſe them; no attention was paid them, and the ſoldiers did not leave off drinking until the barrels were entirely empty.

Meanwhile, Weſtermann, on the information of his ſpies, led his diviſion to the ſpot, and, at the head of fifteen hundred picked men, preſented himſelf before the gates of Chatillon. *Who's there?* demanded the centinel. *A royaliſt*, replied he. *Enter!* rejoined the other. He immediately advanced, killed the ſentinel, and found the Vendeans lying about the ſtreets, ſtupid or ſenſeleſs; after putting them all to the ſword, he ſet fire to the town, of which he made himſelf completely maſter. The chiefs had ſcarcely time to mount their horſes, and eſcape to Mortagne; whilſt the patriotic army marched by the light of the flames to rejoin Weſtermann in Chatillon.

deſtroyed by means of ſtrong liquors. We read in Frédégaire that, under the reign of Clotaire III. fifty thouſand French, having croſſed the Alps in order to re-eſtabliſh Pertharite upon the throne of the Lombards, the uſurper Grimoald, unwilling to run the riſk of a battle, feigned on a ſudden to be panic-ſtruck, and retiring with precipitation, left in his camp a part of his baggage, with a conſiderable number of hogſheads of wine. The French haſtening to plunder, ſwallowed the bait,

The capture of this town had more alarmed than weakened the Vendeans. The bloody battle before mentioned had not decided the quarrel, for the inſurgents had even gained an advantage over the republicans.

Recovered from their ſurpriſe, they might the next day have collected their forces, and extinguiſhed in the blood of the republicans the fire of Chatillon. Weſtermann and his colleagues felt ſo haſtily the weakneſs of their poſition, that during the night they made good their retreat, and evacuate the town. Their fears were but too well grounded, for in the courſe of the night, the Vendean chiefs rallied, and marched upon Chatillon. To render their victory more ſure, they ſurrounded the town, and ſeized on the principal poſts; aſtoniſhed at not finding the enemy, they dreaded a ſurpriſe, and ſent five hundred men to take poſſeſſion of one of the gates; they paſſed, however, without finding any reſiſtance, and the army entered with them.

This place preſented a moſt dreadful ſpectacle; heaps of half-burnt carcaſes ſtrewed the ſtreets, and

and finiſhed by getting intoxicated and ſtupified. Grimoald returned in the middle of the night, ſurpriſed them aſleep, and put them to the ſword.

all

all the houſes were in a general conflagration. The cries of deſpair of the inhabitants, who ruſhed into the midſt of the flames to ſave ſome of their effects, and the craſh of buildings falling into ruins, preſented a complete picture of deſolation. Not able to endure the ſight, the Vendean chiefs made no efforts to ſtop the progreſs of the flames, but, filled with rage and deſpair, inſtantly ſet off in purſuit of the enemy; for after marching ſeveral hours, without any hopes of coming up with them, they diſmiſſed the troops, and appointed the rendezvous for the morrow at Mortagne.

I ought to remark on this occaſion, that the dreadful plan of burning towns, invented by Robeſpierre and his partiſans, was ſo much the more abſurd, as it did a general injury to the Republic without furthering in the leaſt the end propoſed; on the contrary, the unfortunate inhabitants, whoſe wives and children had been maſſacred, whoſe houſes had been deſtroyed, having no domeſtic tye, and no other property than their muſkets, either gave themſelves up to deſpair, or joined the armies, where only they could gain ſubſiſtence, and thus became true ſoldiers; ſo much the more formidable, as nothing was left to them but to revenge themſelves, or to die with arms

in their hands. Another conſideration ought to have been a ſufficient motive for not adopting this abſurd ſyſtem; the fear of repriſals.

What would have been the fate of Saumur, Angers, Mans, Laval, Dol, and many other flouriſhing cities where the Vendeans entered in triumph, had not the moderation of the generals preſerved theſe towns from the torch of the incendiary, and complete devaſtation; or had they from ſome blind ſentiment of revenge followed the plans of the Jacobins? who can reflect without horror on the maſs of ruins which at this time would have covered a part of France? this dreadful ſyſtem, the moſt fitted to add new horrors and new crimes to the civil war, was either the offspring of patriotiſm run mad, or of the moſt conſummate and artful wickedneſs.

Meanwhile, the Vendeans, buſy at Mortagne in collecting the flower of their army, were overwhelmed with the moſt dreadful intelligence. Not only was the army of Chalbos marching to drive them from the poſt they occupied, but two ſtrong republican diviſions, drawn from the Lower Vendée, were advancing to take them in rear, threatening at the ſame time both Tiffauges and Chollet.

Charrette

Charrette by a falſe combination, had aided the projects of the republicans. Inſtead of engaging the attention of the armies he had in front, and making a powerful diverſion in favour of the grand army on the ſide of Tiffauges, he engaged in the vain project of ſeizing Noirmoutiers, and thus abandoned the Upper Vendée to the united efforts of the republicans. The republican generals took advantage of this capital fault, and marched in three columns againſt the flower of the Vendean forces, fully perſuaded that victory ſoon would deliver them up in ſucceſſion the Vendée, Charrette, and Noirmoutiers.

The celebrated Weſtermann was not at this time in the number of generals in ſervice. Robeſpierre had ordered him to Paris, where he was for ſome time ſuſpended from his employments, and the brave fellows he had ſo ſucceſsfully commanded were thereby deprived of his aſſiſtance. At this time, a report was ſpread, that the Jacobins were deſirous of prolonging the civil war, and that they fed the flame. The tyrannical acts of Robeſpierre leave no doubt on my mind of ſuch being his intention. This monſter, jealous of Weſtermann's merit, and in fact of every other perſon of ability, ſeem to have

have adopted for himſelf Tarquin's inſtructions to his ſon. The capture of Chatillon was a thunder-ſtroke to him as well as to the Vendée. He feared that the extinction of the civil war would wreſt from him the powerful arm of terror, and deprive him of a pretext for his aſſaſſinations and plunders; in a word, the greedy tiger had further need of new victims, that he might riot in their blood, and revel in their ſpoils*. Be that as it may, Weſtermann thus diſgraced, might have felt that Robeſpierre's hatred was the ſilent preparation of his grave. We ſhall ſhortly ſee to what a length that hatred was carried: at this period he was compelled to reſign, being tormented by contradictions and ſuſpicions, which are often more prejudicial to a man of honour than complete diſgrace.

Whilſt the republican armies were uniting their forces, and preparing to march upon Mortagne, the Vendean leaders held a council, and

* The obſervation of the famous Danton, the Coryphée of the Jacobins, is well known. When one of his friends remarked to him that the barbarous laws which daily emanated from the committee, of which he was a member, would ſtrip France of half its land owners: *So much the better*, replied the infuriate demagogue, *we ſtand in need of a new emiſſion of emigrants.*

tried

tried every meaſure to avert the ſtorm. Poſted between Mortagne and Chollet, they alike defended both towns, which could not be taken except by a battle. Couriers were every day diſpatched to haſten the arrival of reinforcements, and officers haſtily aſſembled from all parts, followed by all the ſoldiers they could muſter. Under theſe circumſtances, Bonchamps rejoined the army with a body of ten thouſand men, ready to bury themſelves under the aſhes of the Vendée; not ſatisfied with theſe reinforcements, the chiefs ſent ſeveral meſſengers to Charrette to inform him of their diſtreſs, and provoke a diverſion upon Tiffauges. They alſo took poſſeſſion of the principal heights, and eſtabliſhed detachments upon the moſt advantageous poſts in the vicinity of their camp; upon the whole, they took every precaution neceſſary to enſure a victory. Theſe diſpoſitions, which were certainly well planned, were rendered of no effect from errors which they afterwards committed. However great might be the confidence of the Vendean chiefs, they could not but reflect, that if routed, they had no point of retreat. Obliged in that caſe to fall back on the Loire, they thought it would be advantageous at all events to ſecure the paſſage of that river, and therefore diſpatched four thouſand choſen men,

men to ſeize upon Varades, a town ſituated on the other ſide of that river. This plan was executed, and Varades was taken; but independently of the danger they ran in dividing their forces at this criſis, the Vendeans began to loſe their courage, and, during the battles of Mortagne and Chollet, all their thoughts were directed towards the river, the paſſage of which had been prepared for them.

On the 25th of October, 1793, the two armies came within ſight of each other. The republicans, commanded by Léchelle and Beaupuy, wore an air of confidence, that was the preſage of victory; but the Vendeans on the other ſide, advanced to the combat, like men determined to bury themſelves in the ruins of their country. The battle commenced at one o'clock in the afternoon. The two armies ruſhed upon each other with fury, and victory remained undecided till eleven at night. At that time, the republicans, fatigued by their numerous long marches, began to give way, when Léchelle, taking advantage of the darkneſs of the night, marched round with his body of reſerve, and ſuddenly fell upon the wing commanded by Leſcures. At this unexpected attack, the Vendeans gave way on all ſides,

ſides, and fled panic-ſtruck to Chollet; Leſcures, ſeeing this diſorder, ruſhed in amongſt the fugitives, rallied a part, and led them back upon the enemy. The exertions and example of this brave captain had already in ſome degree renewed the combat, when he received a mortal wound, and fell in the midſt of his men. His officers led him bleeding out of the thickeſt of the engagement, and conducted him to Beaupreau. The inſtant the news of his fall ſpread through the Vendean army, the ſoldiers loſt their courage and fled, leaving the victorious republicans in poſſeſſion of Mortaigne, and a part of their artillery. The next day Chollet opened its gates. Several generals made vain attempts to prevent the deſtruction of this flouriſhing city; their orders were not attended to, and pillage and murder in every quarter rendered the place a ſcene of horror and deſolation: the incendiary torch had already ſpread through the ſuburbs, when the noiſe of cannon was ſuddenly heard.—After repoſing ſome hours at Beaupreau, the Vendean army, more harraſſed than diſcouraged, advanced upon Chollet, to try the chance of another engagement. On hearing of the enemy's approach, Léchelle cauſed the *generale* to be beat, and ranged his troops in order of battle. At noon the attack commenced; the firſt ſhock

of the right wing of the Vendeans was ſo violent, that they penetrated nearly to the ſuburbs, and although the republicans endeavoured ſeveral times to repulſe the enemy, they could not drive them back to their firſt poſition; ſeveral diviſions in vain advanced with charged bayonets upon a body of troops commanded by Stoffflet; theſe attacks, which were ſternly reſiſted, only ſerved to renew the battle.

Whilſt fortune ſmiled thus on the right wing of the Vendeans, the left had experienced the reverſe. The Mayençais, who were oppoſed to this wing, had already broken it by three vigorous charges, when Beaupuy, falling with his cavalry on the ſcattered ranks of the enemy, overthrew them on all ſides, and decided the victory, which till then had remained uncertain. The Vendean chiefs, however, did not forget themſelves at this criſis, but flew amongſt the fugitives, trying to reanimate their drooping courage, and calling to their cavalry to advance; but the greater part had already retreated to Beaupreau. On receiving this intelligence, Laroche-Jaquelin, D'Elbée, Bonchamps, and the moſt celebrated of their chiefs, perceived that the time was come for them to fall with the ruins of their party; collecting, therefore

fore, haſtily a body of one hundred and fifty cavaliers, they ruſhed upon the conquerors: whereever this deſperate troop preſented itſelf, they left the traces of their paſſage; ſeveral republican officers fell under their ſtroke, and the brave Beaupuy, borne by his courage into the middle of this formidable ſquadron, was on the point of being made priſoner, having had three horſes killed under him. But at length the party became unequal to the conqueſt, the victorious army ſurrounded the Vendean chiefs, and directed their whole ſtrength againſt them. Bonchamps and D'Elbée both killed by one fatal ſhot, had already met the fate they ſought; more than ten of the braveſt officers had ſhared the ſame fate, and two-thirds of this choſen band were either wounded or dying. Laroche-Jaquelin, whoſe clothes were ſhattered by bullets, at length thought it time to retreat; but even this now became every minute more dangerous to accompliſh, when a body of Vendean infantry, hearing of the danger of its chiefs, boldly devoted itſelf to their ſafety, and returned to the fight. By prodigious efforts, they ſucceeded in diſengaging them, and dragged D'Elbée, who yet breathed, and who lived ſome months after, from the hotteſt of the fight; Laroche-Jaquelin, with a few men, had the good fortune

to

to gain Beaupreau. The right wing of the Vendeans, hearing of the diſaſter of the left, retreated, and with great difficulty ſucceeded in rejoining their general. Meanwhile Laroche-Jaquelin, now the only ſupport of his party, after allowing his army a few hours repoſe, gave orders to march to St. Florent, and ſet off immediately, accompanied by the greater part of his men. Two hours after his departure the republicans, favoured by the night, penetrated into Beaupreau, and put to death every perſon they met. I ſhall draw a veil over the horrors which took place in this town; ſuffice it to ſay, that they ſurpaſſed all thoſe of which the Vendée had as yet been the witneſs and the victim.

Meanwhile the Vendean army reached St. Florent, and prepared to croſs the Loire*. On all ſides crowds

* The motives for this deciſion will be found ſufficiently ſpecious; they were certain of finding a number of diſcontented in Britanny and Anjou; they hoped, that ſupported by an army, theſe would not heſitate to come forward, and that they ſhould alſo find in theſe provinces new reſources wherewith to recommence the war; while on the other hand, the country they had quitted being nothing but a heap of ruins, it was not poſſible for ſo numerous an army to ſubſiſt.—Such were the reaſons alledged to the ſoldiers, to induce them to this

crowds of men and women arrived who had eſcaped the fire and carnage, and who came trembling to rejoin their huſbands or their fathers, and to ſhare with them the horrors of their deſperate ſituation.

It was at this time that the Committee of Public Safety paſſed a decree, by which they fixed the preciſe time when the war ſhould finiſh. Men of ſenſe could not forbear ſmiling to ſee men paſſing decrees againſt Fortune, and taking upon them to command victory. This folly reminds us of that of Xerxes, who ordered the ſea to be whipped for having diſobeyed his ſovereign orders. We ſhall preſently ſee how fortune mocked their commands,

this emigration; but the real motive, which decided the generals to take this meaſure, was, that in drawing the Vendeans from their country, they made them the dependants of fortune, and in forming them into a permanent body, left them only two reſources, of conquering or dying with them. If on the one hand, this latter reaſon appeared deciſively to favour the project, many greater conſiderations militated ſtrongly againſt it on the other. Was it with a vanquiſhed and fugitive army they could hope to gain freſh partiſans? Could the Bretons, who, at the time Nantes was beſieged, had not reſolved to aſſiſt them, feel themſelves leſs unwilling to ſhare the fortunes of proſcribed fugitives? in conducting the Vendeans alſo into a ſtrange country, did they not expoſe themſelves on the firſt defeat to want

commands, and revenged herſelf by reverſing their decree*.

On the 8th of October, Laroche-Jaquelin finally determined to try the famous paſſage, and the order for their departure was given. The Vendeans had previouſly confined in the priſons of St. Florent, ſeveral thouſands of patriots whom they had taken in different engagements, and before their departure had reſolved to ſhoot them. Theſe unhappy wretches had already reached their laſt hour, when Leſcures, then expiring, heard their plaintive cries. Rage and indignation gave him freſh vigor, and he cauſed himſelf to be carried to the Council, after having given orders to ſuſpend the execution. In vain they anſwered him, that the right of repriſals would not allow them to be ſaved, that his pity was miſplaced, that they were ſo many enemies left behind the army, and that perhaps

a rallying point? It follows, therefore, that they either hazarded all, or calculated on continual victories. If to this we add the egregious fault the chiefs committed in ſuffering the ſoldiers to take with them their wives and children, we ſhall be obliged to acknowledge that the paſſage of the Loire gave the death blow to the Vendée.

* See Notes, Nos. XV, XVI, XVII, and XVIII.

they

they would even interrupt the rear guard, at the moment of embarkation. "No barbarous reprisals," cried this generous captain, "Are they not men, are they not Frenchmen? No gentlemen, they shall not be slain in cold blood while I am here!" The dignified and commanding tone of Lescures, and the yet greater ascendancy of so renowned a chief, at length induced the Council to sign the pardon of these prisoners, and France owes to the humanity of a proscribed leader, the preservation of thousands of her defenders*.

Meanwhile

* I am far from justifying the insurrection of the Vendée and I believe, in the course of this work, I have made my profession of faith on that subject; but if I might be allowed to palliate the crime which Lescures committed in arming himself against the majority of his fellow-citizens, I should say that he was misled; and that in the general disorder caused by anarchy, he could not hear the voice of his country, stifled by the howlings of the different factions. However this may be, we can affirm, to his glory, that in the midst of the horrors of a civil war, he always preserved the heart of a Frenchman. All those whom the chance of war threw into the hands of the insurgents, regarded him as their tutelary saint, and the instant they beheld him, considered themselves in perfect safety. More than twenty thousand, who owe their lives to him, are to this day monuments of his unceasing humanity. The celebrated Mathurin de Les-

cures

Meanwhile the veſſels were rowed acroſs the Loire, and the army had juſt paſſed over, when the republican advanced guard appeared at St. Florent.

cures, ſo well known at Malta under the appellation of the brave Romégas, and who died in the year 1581, was one of the anceſtors of the Vendean Leſcures.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER VI.

PASSAGE OF THE LOIRE.

THE Vendeans flying with their wives and children from their country, a prey to the flames, reſembled the Trojans, who reunited themſelves on Mount Ida, and whom Æneas ſome days after conducted acroſs unknown ſeas to find a new Troy in Latium. The fate of the Vendeans, however, was ſtill more deplorable; for the Greeks ſatisfied, after the deſtruction of the empire of Priam, with the exemplary vengeance which they inflicted for the rape of Helen, never thought of following the unhappy remains of Ilion; whilſt the republicans, in order to extinguiſh every ſpark of the conflagration, were eager for the total extermination of theſe unhappy fugitives, who every where met an enemy, and who could not move a ſtep except at the point of the ſword.

It was impoſſible for any ſituation to be more deſolate than that of the Vendeans, on leaving their boats: a fugitive army in a ſtrange country, without proviſions, burdened with a number of women and children, followed by a victorious army, and without any other proſpect than certain death. Deſpair, it has been ſaid, produces miracles, and the ſtrength of mind diſplayed by the Vendeans under theſe circumſtances is certainly wonderful. The whole of France was aſtoniſhed to ſee men whom they imagined were deſtroyed, call forth new vigor and new means. It has been remarked, that in paſſing the Loire, they had become new men, and that they recovered their courage on loſing ſight of the place of their misfortunes. Their forces indeed appeared ſuddenly to increaſe in proportion to their diſtreſs; their new combats could only be compared to thoſe of giants; and if the genius of the republic had not guarded her with a watchful eye, and guided her brave defenders to the battle of Mans, ſhe might have been in danger of being deſtroyed in her infancy. Not that the republican army had loſt any of the brilliant courage by which it triumphed at Chollet, but what could be done againſt deſperadoes, who, placed between the bayonet and the ſcaffold, knew no danger, precipitated themſelves into the midſt of the thickeſt battalions,

battalions, and fought for either victory or death; but the recital of those bloody actions will confirm what I have here advanced.

The first town which submitted to the Vendeans upon their landing, was Varades*; Ancenis had resisted in vain; its barriers and iron gratings were beaten down by the cannon, and it fell into the hands of the enemy.

Ingrande, Segré, and Candé also submitted to the same yoke: Chateau-Gontier attempted to try the chance of arms; but after an engagement of some hours, the republicans too weak, were obliged to retreat, and leave the town to the conquerors. This example did not intimidate the inhabitants of Laval; they assembled near their walls a sufficient number of the national guard, upon whom they founded their hopes: these new levies, however, could not long resist a formidable and disciplined army; in less than an hour, the mass was dispersed, and the colours of the Vendée waved on the walls of Laval. It was in this town that Laroche-Jaquelin, previously appointed at

* Varades had been taken by a Vendean detachment previous to the passage of the army.

Varades, generaliſſimo of the inſurgents, made the enumeration of his army. He found that it amounted to thirty thouſand foot, and one thouſand two hundred cavalry, beſides an immenſe number of women and children.

Meanwhile, the conquerors of Chollet, after having paſſed the Loire, purſued by forced marches the prey which had eſcaped them. Two days after the capture of Laval, the brave Mayençais, at the head of the advanced guard, appeared under its walls, and poſted themſelves near the bridge d'Entraſme, where the Vendean army flew to meet them. The Mayençais had to ſuſtain the honour they had obtained at Chollet, and their adverſaries to wipe off the diſgrace; they accordingly fought with the greateſt fury. The former, greatly inferior in point of number, had on their ſide ſkill and diſcipline; while the Vendeans were ſuperior in numbers, and fought deſperately. After a battle of ſix hours, the victory ſtill remained doubtful, till Stofflet, by a ſudden attack, decided it in favour of the rebels. At the head of a body of fifteen hundred men, he made a circuit, and taking the enemy's columns ſuddenly in the rear, fired at the diſtance of forty paces, and then ruſhed on with charged bayonets. This briſk attack threw

threw the republican ranks into diſorder; driven forcibly one againſt the other, the two parties were intermixed, and their muſquets became uſeleſs; they ſeized each other by the hair of the head, fighting only with their bayonets, and the field of battle was covered with the ſlain. Notwithſtanding the prodigious valour of the Mayençais, they were thrown into diſorder, and could neither withſtand the force of the two attacks, nor fight, rally, or make a good retreat. The enemy made a terrible ſlaughter of theſe brave men, the loſs of whom their country muſt for ever deplore, and whoſe memory muſt for ever be held in veneration. Thoſe who eſcaped retreated to Chateau-Gontier. Several Vendeans have aſſured me, that the Mayençais might have been aſſiſted by a republican column, which was near Laval; but that from a baſe ſentiment of jealouſy, they rather determined to ſacrifice men, who were regarded even by their enemies as the flower of the republican army. This aſſertion is, however, probably ill-founded, and appears entirely ſo, when all circumſtances are conſidered.

The republicans, however, did not loſe any of their courage, as the greater part of the conquerors of Chollet had not ſhared in the laſt battle.

General

General Léchelle who commanded them, was not long before he preſented himſelf at Laval; but even the ſmall interval which had occured ſince the laſt battle was ſufficient to procure the Vendeans a conſiderable reinforcement, and more than ten thouſand malcontents of the environs of Laval had joined the Vendean army. It is difficult to conceive how Laroche-Jaquelin could have gained a third victory without this reinforcement. Notwithſtanding all the courage of the republicans, they were obliged to yield; fortune had deſerted the banners of the patriotic armies ſince the paſſage of the Loire. After a long and bloody battle, the republican ranks were thrown into confuſion, and the rout was ſoon complete. At this battle, Leſcures, obſerving the danger into which his army would be drawn by a defeat, ruſhed amongſt the ranks, and ſo animated the Vendeans, that falling on the enemy with redoubled fury, the battle was ſoon decided. I have heard, that general Léchelle, not being able to rally the fugitives, loſt his ſenſes, but I am not certain of the truth of this aſſertion. The victors advanced next day to Chateau-Gontier, which town ſerved as an aſylum for the vanquiſhed. They had an engagement in this place, in which general Beaupuy performed prodigies of valour. This brave general, at the head of a ſelect corps, ſuſtained

ſuſtained for a long time the efforts of the enemy. Being at length wounded by a ball, which had pierced his lungs, he ſent his ſhirt ſtained with blood to his grenadiers : animated at the ſight, they made freſh efforts to wreſt the victory from the Vendeans; but the reſt of the army being in full retreat, they were finally obliged to abandon the field of battle.

The victories gained by the rebels after the paſſage of the Loire, had created more ſurpriſe than alarm in the republicans. A diviſion of new troops and chaſſeurs of Paris, poſted at Ernée, determined to wait for the conquerors, and Laroche-Jaquelin was equally reſolved to make them repent their temerity. By a well-planned manœuvre, he divided his army into three columns, and ſo well concealed his movements from the enemy, that they had not the leaſt idea of his approach. Two of theſe columns made a circuit in order to ſurround the patriots, whilſt another column advanced towards them in front; ſeeing the ſcanty numbers of the enemy, the republicans were aſtoniſhed at their daring courage, and flew boldly to the attack. Laroche-Jaquelin, to draw them ſtill farther into the ſnare, withdrew a few paces, and the republicans, perceiving

ceiving the enemy give way, redoubled their efforts; they thought themſelves ſecure of victory; when the other two columns of the inſurgents ſuddenly appeared, and took them in flank and rear. Aſtoniſhed at this threefold attack, the republicans only thought of eſcaping, and in an inſtant their rout was complete. This laſt victory ſpread terror through all the departments of Britanny: Fougères was carried by aſſault, and Auſtrain, Dol, Pontorſon, and Avranches threw open their gates to the conquerors. It is ſaid, that at this criſis, Laroche-Jaquelin propoſed in the council to march to Paris, and if they did not ſucceed in getting poſſeſſion of it, to attack the army of the North in the rear, while the Auſtrians marched upon it in front. So bold a propoſition aſtoniſhed the other chiefs; ſome wiſhed to take the road of Angers, and following up their advantages from the diſperſion of the patriotic armies, return into the Vendée: others, deceived by the promiſes of the Engliſh, propoſed to take Granville, that they might have a ſea-port, where they could diſembark. This plan, certainly the worſt that the Vendeans could have followed, was, happily for the republic, that which the majority adopted. Granville was therefore attacked three days ſucceſſively, but without ſucceſs. Not being able to find in the whole

whole army a man who knew the ſtate of the fortifications of this place, the inſurgents attacked it on the ſtrongeſt ſide, and after three days unſucceſsful ſiege, were obliged to retreat. The garriſon of this town by its gallant reſiſtance covered itſelf with glory*.

Aſhamed of the firſt repulſe which they had met with ſince their paſſage, the Vendeans returned to Vitri; a republican corps was the firſt to experience, that if the rebels underſtood nothing of

* Of the paſſage acroſs the Loire and the defence of Granville, we extract the following account from the third volume of Miſs Williams's Letters.

"It was at this period that the Committee of Public Safety, through the organ of Barrere, publiſhed the happy accompliſhment of their prophetic decree, by declaring that the 'Vendee exiſted no longer.' At Paris, as no one dared to doubt of the infallibility of the Committee, and ſtill leſs to ſuſpect its veracity, we imagined that the royaliſts had been completely cruſhed, becauſe the Committee informed the Convention, 'that they exiſted no more.' We learned, however, very ſoon what this annihilation of the Vendée meant. It was not altogether one of thoſe agreeable figures of rhetoric with which Barrere was wont to harangue the Convention, ſince there was ſome truth in the declaration, which we did not diſcover at the firſt glance; for the great army of the royaliſts

of ſieges, they knew perfectly well how to fight in the field. From Vitri the conquerors went to

aliſts had indeed evacuated the ſeat of war in the Vendée, if that could be called an evacuation which was a triumphal march acroſs the Loire. This paſſage was accompliſhed without any loſs, and the royaliſt army remained on the northern ſide, without moleſtation, for three days; after which they began their march towards the ſea coaſt acroſs the departments, which form the eaſtern parts of the provinces of Brittany. It might have been expected that their paſſage would have been oppoſed, or their march harraſſed; and that this did not happen, was another of Phillipeaux's myſteries; but the royaliſts were ſuffered to take uninterrupted poſſeſſion of the country as far as Laval, having ſurrounded four thouſand men who were ſent in purſuit of them, and whom they cut in pieces; the ſanſculotte general, Olignier, who was ordered to march againſt the royaliſts, and protect the patriots, having thought it more prudent to keep always at ten leagues diſtance. From Laval they marched to Vitri, a place which was repreſented as a moſt advantageous and formidable paſs, of which alſo they took poſſeſſion, as the conventional Generaliſſimo had effected its evacuation, though he had every means of reſiſtance, and might have ſtopped the march of the enemy; ſince the place was fortified, had a garriſon of four thouſand men, and was proviſioned for more than a month. This place, which the inhabitants after the departure of the garriſon would have defended, if they had not been forbidden, was taken, and the royaliſts, after defeating ſome other corps which were ſent ſucceſſively againſt them, marched on without further reſiſtance to the coaſts, through Avranches to Granville.

Granville

to Dol, where they were ſhortly afterwards attacked by three columns of the enemy. It ſeemed as if

Granville is a ſea port on that part of the coaſt which fronts the iſlands of Jerſey and Guernſey, ſtretching north and ſouth, and forming a right angle with the coaſt that goes towards St. Maloes and Breſt, of which the famous mountain of St. Michael is the point. It is the only port on that coaſt, and the poſſeſſion of it would have given the royaliſts the advantage of immediate communication with the allies of the emigrants and the Engliſh, and the means of ſecuring the moſt effective ſuccour. As they had paſſed through a large tract of country with ſo little interruption, they did not expect much reſiſtance, where the means of making it were ſo few, and therefore concluded they could repulſe the garriſon of Granville, which had marched out to meet them, and make themſelves maſters of that important place as eaſily as they had gained the reſt. They took poſſeſſion of the ſuburbs; but when they prepared to ſcale the walls, they found a reſiſtance which they had little expected. The firſt hero that fell was the mayor, in the habit of his office, who had taken the command of the principal poſt. The royaliſt artillery made great ravages, and the houſes in the ſuburbs afforded the aſſailants conſiderable ſhelter. The beſieged ſet fire to theſe houſes, and the attack became ſtill more deſperate: the royaliſts were often driven down the ramparts, and the rocks that overhung the town ſtreamed with blood. This battle laſted near thirty hours, and I have been told by one of my acquaintance who fought on the republican ſide, that the ſpectacle was truly ſublime. Not only every man, but every woman and child was that day a warrior—the artillery was ſerved by the children, who, forming chains from

if the republicans had united all their forces, in order to cruſh the rebels at one blow. The attack commenced at three points, upon the high roads of Pontorſon, Antrain, and at St. Malo.—To make head more effectually againſt the enemy, Laroche-Jaquelin divided his army into three bo-

the arſenal to the ramparts, conveyed the ammunition, while the women were employed in aſſiſting their huſbands, brothers, and fathers, and preventing the flames of the houſes in the ſuburbs from communicating to thoſe in the town.

The royaliſts were at length repulſed with great loſs by this handful of republicans, and all the important advantages which they reaſonably expected from this expedition, failed. They were forced to retreat back to the Loire, and in this retreat they might have been completely cut off; but the cowardly and debaſing genius of ſansculotiſm again prevailed; for Roſſignol kept at ſeven leagues diſtance with his army at the moment of the perilous paſſage at Dol, and when the royaliſts had effected it, he brought up his troops who were completely routed and driven back to Rennes. The royaliſt army in their retreat laid ſiege to Angers, which was bravely defended by the garriſon and the inhabitants in the abſence of Roſſignol. At Mans, the royaliſts were defeated with great loſs by Weſtermann: having divided themſelves into two columns, they attempted to paſs the Loire at Chateau-briant and Ancenis; but their good fortune fled when the ſanſculotte general had ceaſed to command. At Ancenis they were again routed with great ſlaughter, and the paſſage of the Loire was effected with a very conſiderable loſs."—*Note of the Tranſlator.*

dies.

dies. After ſeveral hours fighting, this general ſucceeded in defeating the diviſion oppoſed to him; but whilſt he was engaged in purſuing the enemy, he was informed that Stofflet, who commanded one of the three bodies of his army, had been briſkly repulſed, and that, poſted in a wood with two pieces of cannon, he was on the point of yielding to the republicans. He was alſo informed at the ſame time, that the commandant of the other diviſion was taken priſoner, and that every thing on that ſide was in confuſion. At this intelligence, he marched back, and fell vigorouſly upon Antrain to diſengage his troops. Stofflet felt new ardor at his arrival, and the battle was renewed.

The exertions of both parties were now directed to this point; the battles of Chollet and and Laval excepted, no engagement had yet been ſo bloody, as that which was now fought with unexampled fury. Their bayonets croſſed more than once, and blood flowed in abundance. After fifteen hours fighting, victory at length declared itſelf for Laroche-Jaquelin, in conſequence of a vigorous and rapid charge which he made at the head of a body of reſerve. The number of killed on both ſides was very conſiderable, and this battle may certainly

certainly be conſidered as one of the longeſt and moſt ſanguinary of the whole war*.

So many bloody defeats would have depopulated any other country but France; Perſia and Aſſyria were formerly overturned by leſs ſhocks. When we reflect that, independently of this deſtructive civil war, France had to combat the greater part of the powers of Europe, we are at a loſs to conceive how ſhe could ſuſtain ſuch an unequal conteſt. It is ſurpriſing, alſo, that a ſtate with a bad internal government, ſhould have ſo well maintained itſelf externally. Never was French energy diſplayed to ſuch advantage. Rome, with its boaſted magnanimity, trembled on hearing of the defeat of Cannes; the march of Spartacus, and the revolt of her allies were ſeveral times expected to overthrow this warlike republic; but the power of Rome was precarious, her citizens ſcarcely making a fiftieth part of her allies and bondmen: the deſtruction of ten legions would have been to her an incurable wound; in a word, neither her power, reſources, nor energy can be compared with thoſe which France diſplayed during the numerous ſtorms of the revolution.

* See Note, No. XIV.

Meanwhile

Meanwhile Laroche-Jaquelin, aſtoniſhed at beholding the efforts of the republic, and perceiving that one bloody engagement was only the forerunner of another ſtill more ſanguinary; deceived alſo by thoſe from whom he expected aſſiſtance, weakened by his loſſes, and in fine, loſing all hope of an inſurrection in maſs of the Eaſtern provinces, reſolved on returning to the Vendée. This project might have been executed a month before, but at this period a return was impoſſible. The enemy had employed all this time in fortifying the places and bridges by which the Vendeans might have effected their paſſage.

In order to make their way, they were now neceſſitated to beſiege ſeveral places, which, as I have already obſerved, they were not capable of undertaking. Notwithſtanding all theſe obſtacles, the army, however, began its march, and arrived at Ernée; it was in this town they depoſited the remains of the brave Leſcures. This general, wounded at Chollet, died a ſhort time after the battle of Laval: his body had ever ſince been carried about in the rear of the army; but at length, foreſeeing the dangers which threatened them, Laroche-Jaquelin ordered it to be buried with military honours at Ernée. A few days after this

this event, the Vendeans reached the gates of Angiers; the garriſon was commanded by the gallant Beaupuy, who, though wounded, ordered himſelf to be carried upon the ramparts. This general repulſed with vigor all the attacks of the enemy, and by his ſpirited reſiſtance gave time to the republicans to come to his aſſiſtance. Learning the arrival of a new republican army, the Vendeans raiſed the ſiege, and reſolved on returning to Britanny to recruit, but, attacked in their retreat by ſeveral columns, they did not reach Baugé until after five days of continual fighting.

On the day following the town of La Flèche endeavouring to oppoſe their paſſage, was taken by ſtorm*, and the rebels marched upon Mans, which

* Since the period of their paſſage of the Loire, the Vendeans had never found themſelves in ſo critical a ſituation. The town of La Flèche, defended by forty thouſand men, and by the river of the Loire, the bridges of which had been deſtroyed, preſented to the aſſailants an inſurmountable barrier; on the other ſide, the advanced guard of the republican army was fighting with the rear-guard of the Vendeans. Thus hemmed in between a river and an army, the inſurgents had no means whatever of eſcape, when Laroche-Jaquelin, at the head of a detachment of fifteen hundred men, diſcovered a ford at about two leagues up the river, which he paſſed, and falling

which they alſo took after a very warm reſiſtance. Some days afterwards, Laroche-Jaquelin hearing that Weſtermann, who had been ſent back to the Vendée, was approaching at the head of a numerous army to drive him from Mans, was guilty of a fault, which brought about the ruin of his party. Inſtead of marching off his ſoldiers from Mans, where plenty and good living enervated their courage, and leading them to meet the enemy, he reſolved to remain in that poſt, which he thought advantageous. Weſtermann ſoon preſented himſelf before this town: Laroche-Jaquelin beat to arms, but the greater part of the Vendeans, in a ſtate of intoxication, remained inſenſible to the danger. The cowards, who in the open field would have been obliged to fight, remained ſecreted in Mans, waiting the iſſue of the engagement. Although weakened by this defection, Laroche-Jaquelin for ſome time ſuſtained the ſhock of the enemy. A battery which he had placed

falling upon the garriſon, put it to flight, haſtily repaired the bridge, croſſed over his army, poſted his artillery on the bridge, and in this ſtrong poſition, obliged the republican army to retreat. This affair did the greateſt honour to Laroche-Jaquelin; to him the Vendean army owed its preſervation, and their acclamations after the victory were a ſufficient teſtimony that they conſidered their general as the life and ſoul of their cauſe.

near the town, and which he had maſked, made ſuch dreadful havoc at the beginning of the engagement among the republican ranks, that they were thrown into diſorder, and would have been routed, if Weſtermann, aſſiſted by ſome of the republican generals*, had not renewed the combat. The battle had laſted for five hours with equal ſucceſs, and the victory remained as yet undecided, when Laroche-Jaquelin, twice diſmounted, having had two horſes killed under him, entered Mans to give orders. This retreat diſpirited the Vendeans, who fell back and entered the town with him.

The general returned in vain to the field of battle; in the midſt of the tumult and clamour of the women, his voice was not heard, nor his orders obeyed; thinking therefore the battle loſt, he aſſembled his cavalry and retreated to Laval. Meanwhile, the Vendeans who had been ſcattered about the ſtreet, hearing the noiſe of the cannon,

* The patriotic generals were ſo often ſuſpended or broke by an unſettled and jealous government, that it is not eaſy in this work to notice in a conciſe manner the different chiefs who have commanded the republican armies, during the three campaigns of 1792, 1793, and 1794; I know, however, that in the battle of Mans, the brave Marceau acted as general in chief.

aſſembled,

aſſembled, and advanced againſt the enemy. The engagement began once more in the ſtreets of Mans, and became more ſanguinary than ever : enraged at ſeeing the victory ſo long diſputed, the republicans ruſhed with fury into the enemy's ranks, but were repeatedly driven back by the fire of the muſquetry ; a piece of artillery, charged with caſe-ſhot, did the greateſt execution. This piece which commanded one of the principal ſtreets of Mans, and which was fired upon the patriots at the diſtance of ſixty paces, ſwept away whole ranks. This horrible carnage laſted till evening, the ſtreets of the town ſtreaming with blood : the Vendeans ſtill ſeemed reſolved to bury themſelves under its ruins ; but the republicans at length gained poſſeſſion of the principal poſts of the town, and the inſurgents not ſeeing their General fighting at their head, were under the neceſſity of retreating, which they did in platoons, taking the road of Laval. Laroche-Jaquelin was ſome leagues from Mans, when he judged, by the ſound of the artillery, that his troops were ſtill engaged. Aſhamed of too early a retreat, he turned his horſe, and haſtened at full gallop to rejoin his army ; but all that he could do, was to protect the retreat of the fugitives with his

cavalry. I have been assured, that in this retreat, seeing his cause desperate, he several times rashly rushed upon the enemy, anxious as it were for death, but was at length compelled by some of his officers to retreat to Laval. This general, whose courage was so universally acknowledged, and who had given so many proofs of presence of mind and military knowledge, committed two very capital errors this day: first, in having waited for the enemy at Mans, instead of withdrawing his forces from that town, and secondly, in having too soon despaired of success*.

The Vendeans had no sooner quitted Mans, than a carnage still more horrible took place in this unfortunate city. I shall draw a veil over all the horrors committed in this place, and simply state, that more than eighteen thousand Vendeans, old men, women, and infants, as

* Several Vendeans have assured me, that Laroche-Jaquelin left Mans only to rally the fugitives and renew the combat; this opinion has the air of probability: according to vulgar opinion, however, success is always the fruit of talent, as the reverse is that of inexperience; a general, therefore, let him be ever so brave and skilful, is always in fault when he is beaten.

well

well as ſoldiers, were ſlaughtered. In other reſpects, the republican generals diſplayed on this day the greateſt courage and abilities*.

The Vendeans had now received a wound from which they could never hope to recover. This defeat had deprived them of the braveſt of their ſoldiers, of their artillery, ammunition, and even of hope, the laſt reſource of the wretched.

The chiefs aſſembled at Laval, and unanimouſly agreed, that the only plan which the army could follow, was to approach the Loire, and attempt the paſſage, coſt what it would. They accordingly marched towards Ancenis, continually harraſſed by the republicans. On reaching this town, Laroche-Jaquelin ordered rafts, which being badly conſtructed, appeared ſo unſafe, that the army refuſed to embark. To encourage them by his example, Laroche-Jaquelin, followed by ſeveral officers, ſprung upon the firſt, and after ſtruggling about half an hour againſt the waves, effected a landing on the oppoſite ſide; ſeveral hundreds of his ſoldiers imitated his example, and were as ſucceſsful as their general. It is thought that the majority of the

* See Note, No. XX.

army

army would have paſſed ſucceſsfully, had not the republicans ſuddenly came up, and driven the inſurgents to Savenay. On the next day, this army, deprived of its general, and entirely diſpirited, ſcarcely made a ſhadow of reſiſtance; attacked by the conquerors, it received its death blow in the fields of Savenay.

Such was the reſult of the famous paſſage of the Loire, which coſt France ſo much blood, that no Frenchman can ſtill help ſhuddering at the name of the civil war in the Vendée.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER VII.

CAMPAIGN OF 1794

AFTER the defeat at Savenay, the civil war appeared finiſhed, and ſtrictly ſpeaking, no longer exiſted in the Vendée. The remains of an army which had ſo often carried terror even to the capital, now ſcattered about in the foreſts, or ſecreted in ſome of the communes of Britanny, thought of nothing but of the means of prolonging their exiſtence, and returning back to their homes. Like the Iſraelites, who during their captivity at Babylon, upon the banks of the Euphrates, wept at the remembrance of Jeruſalem, the Vendeans, their eyes continually fixed upon that inſurmountable barrier which divided them from all they held dear, were contriving

triving night and day the means of overcoming this obſtacle, in order once more to viſit their native country.

Meanwhile Laroche-Jaquelin, cut off from his army by this unexpected event, and purſued by a numerous detachment of republicans, was obliged to ſeparate from the few ſoldiers who had followed him, and, accompanied by only one officer, withdrew into the woods, to eſcape the active ſearch of the enemy. Overcome with hunger and fatigue, he ſet off before night with his companion; at the hazard of being diſcovered, they ſtopped at the firſt houſe chance threw in their way, where they found a charitable farmer, who after giving them ſupper, conducted them to a barn to paſs the night. They were ſcarcely aſleep, when the farmer, terrified, came to awake them. "Gentlemen," ſaid he, "fly inſtantly; my houſe is filled with republicans; you alſo run the more riſk, as they even propoſe to ſleep in this very barn, and will be here immediately." "My friend," replied Laroche-Jaquelin, "though we ſhould periſh yet we muſt ſleep; leave us and the care of our preſervation to Providence." The farmer was ſcarcely gone out, when the republicans entered, and, climbing up on the hay,

hay, fell aſleep by the ſide of the two Vendeans. Being all extremely fatigued, they ſlept during the night, and at day break, Laroche-Jaquelin awoke his comrade, and each taking a muſket, haſtened away from ſo perilous an abode. After two days march, they withdrew into a wood, having no other ſubſiſtence than what they took from ſuch as were within reach of their muſkets; but wearied at length by ſo miſerable a way of life, they bent their ſteps towards Chatillon. Laroche-Jaquelin from thence ſent ſeveral emiſſaries into all the neighbouring pariſhes to raiſe new forces, but the remembrance of the defeats at Mans and Savenay was yet too ſtrong in the minds of the Vendeans, to lead them to face new dangers. The commands of the general were no longer regarded, and all that he could do, was to aſſemble a few of the old ſoldiers who had eſcaped from the laſt engagements.

I have no doubt, but that if the Government at this period had confided the command of the republican forces to ſuch a ſkilful, prudent, and above all moderate general, as Hoche, who reached this country too late, the civil war would have been completely quelled. Had an amneſty been granted at this moment, it would have won their

hearts to the republic, cloſed up their wounds, and in a word, have prevented the danger and expence of a new civil war; but the Committee of Public Safety, intoxicated with power, and maddened into rage, thinking that blood only could quench the flame, ſent into the Vendée, in quality of commiſſary, one of thoſe monſters which nature ſometimes produces as the ſcourge of mankind, one of thoſe blood-thirſty tigers, reſembling human kind only in its form. The barbarous Carrier, reaching Nantes ſurrounded by executioners, himſelf more inhuman than any of them, inundated the town, and ſtained the Loire with a deluge of blood; and on the other ſide, the republican generals, inſtead of applying healing balms to their dreadful wounds, made uſe only of the moſt violent cauſtics, fire and ſword. It might well have been ſaid, that the Vendeans in their eyes were no part of the human race; women with child, the ſuperannuated and diſeaſed, the infant in the cradle; nay, even the beaſts*, houſes, ſtones, and alſo the ſoil, appeared to

* It is calculated that eleven hundred thouſand oxen have periſhed either by the fire or the ſword, in this fertile country, from whence Paris and the other great communes of the

to them ſo many enemies deſerving extermination; and I have no doubt, but that, if they had had the power, they would have hurled the thunderbolt on this unfortunate country, to reduce it once more to Chaos. If the reader conceives this ſtatement exaggerated, let him have the courage to read the different *proces verbaux* inſerted at the end of the memorial of Lequinio, printed at Paris the firſt of Brumaire, third year; let him caſt his eyes on the pieces annexed to the trial of Carrier, and alſo to the depoſitions and denunciations addreſſed at the time to the Com-

the interior heretofore were ſupplied with the greater part of their proviſions". *Lequinio, Ouvrage ſur la Vendée*, p. 164.

It is a fact, that the greateſt part of the incendaries diverted themſelves, with liſtening to the moans of the bullocks in their ſtalls, which were on fire, not ſuffering them to be untied; they have been alſo ſeen, when they had nothing to fear from the enemy, take delight in plunging their bayonets into the ſides of the oxen faſtened to the waggons which contained their food. What ſhall I ſay to the burning of corn and fodder, of the rapes, maſſacres, &c.

Non mihi ſi linguæ centum ſint, oraque centum,
Ferrea vox omnes ſcelerum comprendere formas
Poſſim—— —— —— ——

Note of the Author.

See Miſs Williams's letters, from page 51 to 54. Vol. III.

Note of the Tranſlator.

mittee of Public Safety, and reprinted in the different journals.

At the recital of ſo many atrocities, the Vendean party revived; Laroche-Jaquelin found a new army, at the head of which he took Chollet, beat ſeveral republican diviſions, and each day made further progreſs. In vain had the victory of Savenay been followed by the capture of the iſle of Noirmoutiers, and the generaliſſimo D'Elbée, mortally wounded at Chollet, been ſhot in his chair; theſe continued ſucceſſes could not daunt men, who had no alternative but to fight or die. Charrette, though beaten at Bouin, and driven from this iſle, had aſſembled an army, with which he penetrated as far as Maulevrier, where his preſence gave new courage to the party of Laroche-Jaquelin.

Theſe tidings rouſed ſuch of the Vendeans as had eſcaped the carnage of Savenay. By dint of money, they bribed watermen to tranſport them acroſs the Loire in the night. Although the republicans hunted them as wild beaſts, the foreſt of Printiau ſheltered them during the day, and at night they rejoined Charrette, who, poſted on the banks with eight thouſand men, recruited his

his army with theſe new ſoldiers. Several chiefs, and among the reſt, Bernard de Marigny, at length joined Laroche-Jaquelin. It was about this time, that the two columns, named the *infernal*, received orders to march through the Vendée, and to deſtroy every thing they met in their paſſage with fire and ſword: and never were ſavage orders executed with more barbarity. I ſhall not dwell upon all the horrors they committed, but merely refer the reader, if he has courage enough to examine this hideous picture, to the memorial of the repreſentative Lequinio, which I have already noticed; all that I ſhall ſtate is, that the atrocities, previouſly committed, were merely child's play, compared with theſe new horrors; theſe infernal columns maſſacred about the fourth of the remaining population of the country; by the burning of corn, houſes, cattle, and other ravages of all kinds, they coſt the Vendée upwards of twenty-five millions; an enormous loſs, which thirty years of peace and proſperity can ſcarcely repay: and in ſhort, by increaſing the Vendean army in a tenfold proportion, and thereby prolonging the war, they cauſed to France an expence of more than fifty thouſand men. I know that the chiefs, who were commiſſioned to execute theſe barbarous meaſures,

meaſures, have pretended that they acted only in conſequence of ſuperior orders; if this be true, as I am ready to admit, it is but juſt to throw the blame of theſe cruelties upon the real authors. Whatever may be the real ſtate of the caſe, on the approach of theſe exterminating columns, every perſon flew to the woods; thoſe who till then had diſapproved the war, and had not at all interfered, were the firſt to arm, and advance againſt the common enemy.

The patriots who came back to the Vendée, finding their property deſtroyed, no longer knew what power to implore; the greater part, eſcaping by night, reached the frontier towns, and ſpread univerſal alarm. The magiſtrates of theſe towns, filled with indignation, called on the government for vengeance; in a word, the diſorder became general. Taking advantage of this confuſion, Charrette advanced upon Lianché, and ſurpriſed one of theſe armies. The ſoldiers loaded with ſpoils*, choſe to fly rather than fight: more than

* When their knapſacks were full, they loſt all reliſh for fighting, fearing they ſhould loſe them, and the ſoldiers were continually aſking for hoſpital tickets. The chiefs acted ſtill worſe: they put into requiſition the carts belonging to the communes,

than three hundred thouſand livres and five hundred fuſils fell into the hands of the inſurgents, who drove the republicans back to Puy-Belliard, leaving Charrette maſter of the country, at the head of more than fifteen thouſand men. This infernal expedition, therefore, which had been held forth as the means of finiſhing the civil war, was preciſely the cauſe of its revival; all the cruelties, conflagrations, and horrors were of no other avail than to inflame the paſſions to the higheſt pitch; producing no other effect than that of ruining the country, of heightening ſtill further the joy of our enemies, and giving to this war, thus hideous in all its features, the exact ſimilitude of a war of cannibals.

The reader, no doubt, will be curious to know what meaſures Charrette took, after the paſſage of the Loire, to maintain himſelf in the Vendée. So

communes, carried off all the beſt articles from the houſes of the patriots, and then permitted theſe unfortunate perſons to move the reſt, that they might have the brutal pleaſure of burning their houſes. After this conflagration, the patriots were no ſooner brought into the middle of the column, than the volunteers, following the example of their generals, ſeized the reſt, killed the men, violated their wives and daughters, and afterwards bayonetted them".——*Lequinio*, pages 136, 137.

long

long as Laroche-Jaquelin had kept in action the greater part of the republican troops on the other ſide of the river, it is not aſtoniſhing that he ſhould have been able to withſtand the diviſions ſend againſt him; but after the capture of Noirmoutiers, when the generals might have turned their whole force againſt him, it was certainly wonderful to ſee him ſtruggle with advantage againſt ſuch numerous and terrible enemies. It was alſo under theſe circumſtances that he diſplayed the greateſt abilities; for when he ſaw the ſtorm ready to burſt over him, inſtead of following the example of the Upper Vendée, that of collecting all his forces, and hazarding a deciſive engagement, he ſought only to harraſs his enemies, to intercept their proviſions, to ſurpriſe their detached parties, and to fall upon their rear-guard when he found it entangled in narrow paſſes and difficult roads.

If he found himſelf cloſely preſſed by a ſuperior army, whilſt the enemy were ranging themſelves in order of battle, Charrette gave the order *Sauve qui peut*; in an inſtant every man diſappeared: followed by thirty horſemen, he fled with the greateſt expedition to ſuch town as he had fixed upon for the rallying point, which was ſometimes more than eight leagues from the field of battle, and

and while the republicans, eager for the ſpoils, ſpread themſelves in platoons about the neighbouring villages, Charrette fell on the different corps, and killed great numbers, till threatened by the approach of the enemy, he gave freſh orders, and diſappeared with his troops. He reaped great advantages from this mode of carrying on the war; for the patriots, unable to ſubſiſt in a ruined country, immediately on their convoys being interrupted, were obliged to abandon the interior of the Vendée, and retire to their reſpective poſitions. It was by ſuch means, that Charrette ſo long maintained himſelf in his country, and rendered himſelf as formidable to his enemies after a defeat, as Laroche-Jaquelin and Leſcures after their victories. It muſt be admitted, however, that in ſpite of all the dexterity of this ſubtle chieftain, he would have been cruſhed in the courſe of the campaign by the republican armies, if, at this criſis, a new conflagration, no leſs terrible than that of the Vendée, had not burſt forth on the other ſide of the Loire. The war of the Chouans made a powerful diverſion in favour of Charrette. Half the republican forces were obliged to croſs this river, in order to oppoſe the progreſs of this new Vendée, which was ſo much the more terrible as its extent was greater, and as it approached ſo much nearer the capital.

alarm, crying, *Take care of the Chouettes*, and by corruption, *Take care of the Chouans*. This is the real original of a name substituted by the Jacobins at that time for the nicknames of *aristocrate*, *feuillant*, *fédéraliste*, and *modéré*, which they had bestowed on all those who did not coincide with their opinions. This digression upon the Chouans however has drawn me wide from my subject, to which I return.

Whilst Charrette successfully maintained himself in this country, Laroche-Jaquelin on his side made every day new progress; sometimes victorious, and at others defeated; one day he took a town, and the next day was obliged to evacuate it; continually on the march, he threatened the different cantonments about him; keeping his soldiers in constant exercise, and every day finding his party increased by the wrecks of Chollet and Savenay. The republicans, on their side, redoubled their efforts to crush in the bud this fresh insurrection. If they advanced in mass, they found no enemies, if they went back to their different cantonments, they were every day obliged to repel attacks, and sometimes even to undergo partial defeats. Laroche Jaquelin did not leave them a minutes rest, and by number-

less

less different incursions, postponed for some time the end of this disastrous war: but at length, for the tranquillity of the republic, and the ruin of his party, the time arrived which fortune had fixed for the termination of his active life.

Laroche-Jaquelin since his return from the departments on the other side of the Loire, had paid very little attention to his personal safety. In the preceding combats he had fought as a leader, and several times as a private, but since his return he affected the most extravagant rashness. It is said, that foreseeing the triumph of the republic, he waited after the example of Lescures, Bonchamps, and D'Elbée, his friends and coadjutors, to bury himself under the ruins of the Vendée. In a skirmish near Vezino, where the republicans had been put to the rout, he joined with ardor in pursuit of the fugitives. Among these was a soldier who not being able to escape from the cavalry, had hid himself behind a bush. Laroche-Jaquelin disregarding the representations of those about him, advanced to seize him: the volunteer sure of death, hearing the name of the general, wished in dying to render a last service to his country; he aimed at the imprudent Laroche-Jaquelin, who instead

of

of falling back, advanced with unexampled temerity, and at the inſtant he ſtretched out his hand to ſeize him, the ſoldier ſhot him through the head.

Thus periſhed by the hand of a perſon unknown, this celebrated chief, who had riſen ſuperior to ſo many defeats and reverſes. After having eſcaped from the battles of Chollet and Mans, he fell in a ſkirmiſh never to riſe again, and in his fall he drew on that of his whole party. Stofflet appointed generaliſſimo of the army, ordered his death to be kept ſecret; but in ſpite of all his efforts the report of this irreparable loſs ſpread throughout the Vendée, and his fate occaſioned ſo great a conſternation, that had the republican generals known how to take advantage of this event, they would doubtleſs have pacified the Upper Vendée. But there was neither ſufficient unanimity or harmony among them to accompliſh ſo deſirable an end: too many were privately intereſted againſt the termination of this inteſtine war: ſome wiſhed to retain their lucrative employments, others hoped yet to reap advantage from the ſmoaking ruins of the Vendée, and the government, ill adviſed, generally adopted the worſt meaſures. Inſtead, therefore, of profiting by

by the conſternation of the inſurgents, the republicans evacuated the interior of the country, and contented themſelves with eſtabliſhing camps at Chollet, Thouars, and Chiché. By this plan a few ſoldiers were to be kept in active ſervice; but they did not reflect, that in leaving the rebels maſters of the diſtricts of Breſſuire and Chattillon, they allowed them time to recover from their alarm, and take meaſures of defence, and that by this means, the civil war would be neceſſarily prolonged.

The different patriotic camps frequently made incurſions into the inſurgent country, but this was of little uſe, ſince all the advantages which they reaped from theſe partial enterpriſes ſcarely counterbalanced the reverſes which they afterwards underwent.

A few individual maſſacres, and now and then the burning of a few houſes, was the only reſult of ſo ill combined a ſyſtem; which would have ended eventually in greater diſorders, had not the government at length by its wiſdom and moderation put an end to a war which had been rendered atrocious by the commiſſion of ſo many cruelties.

The

The evacuation of the Vendée had procured ſo many advantages to Stofflet, that in leſs than ten months, his forces amounted to upwards of ten thouſand men. At the head of this army he attacked ſeveral times the poſt of Chateignerie; but repulſed by the bravery of the republican troops, he was conſtantly obliged to fall back on his cantonments. It was at the iſſue of one of theſe engagements, that, contradicted by Bernard de Marigny, one of the braveſt officers of the Vendée, he inhumanly ordered him to be ſhot by a body of chaſſeurs who were under his orders. This barbarous act alienated every one from him, and diſpoſed the chiefs, friends of the unfortunate Bernard, to liſten to the propoſitions of peace which were made them, and rid themſelves of this deſpotic game-keeper.

Charrette, on his part, although extremely weakened, ſtill maintained himſelf with conſiderable advantage; part of the republican forces were then employed in reducing the inhabitants of the marſhes, and although theſe rebels were often routed they were never entirely ſubdued. It is certain that their arms were leſs formidable to the patriots, than the unwholeſomeneſs of the water and the air of theſe infectious marſhes which had deſtroyed

deſtroyed more than one half; in a word, if the Vendeans loſt ground every day, the republicans on their part exhibited in their movements ſigns of languor, the ſure forerunners of the termination of civil wars.

I leave it to whoever may write the hiſtory of the Vendée, to deſcribe the events of the reſt of the campaign, which preſents nothing but a horrid picture of mutual cruelties, and frequent actions, but no way deciſive.

I paſs on immediately to the event which delivered France from a yoke as ignominious as it was inſupportable, to the ninth of Thermidor, which by deſtroying the anarchiſts, cruſhed enemies not leſs to be dreaded than the Vendeans.

That glorious day, by overthrowing Robeſpierre and his numerous hordes, ſaved the whole of France from a fate that ſeemed inevitable; the great changes which it produced in every branch of adminiſtration ſoon influenced the ſyſtem which had been till then purſued in the courſe of the civil war. Freed at length from the ſhameful yoke which had ſo long oppreſſed it, the Convention perceived that the continuance of that inteſtine

war only tended to undermine the vital ſtrength of the body politic and every day accelerate its ruin. Too powerful to think itſelf humbled by making the firſt advances, the Convention did not diſdain to hold out its hand to the inſurgents in token of reconciliation. Peaceably inclined perſons were ſent in its name to recal the Vendeans to a ſenſe of their duty and the obligations of nature: all violent meaſures were laid aſide, and theſe beneficent commiſſioners made uſe of nothing but the language of reaſon and humanity. A ſuſpenſion of arms was the firſt effect of this wiſe ſyſtem; very ſoon after, a treaty, or rather a general amneſty, ſigned at the camp of la Jaunaie, agreed upon and accepted with mutual good faith, applied a healing balm to wounds almoſt mortal, and which will yet long continue to bleed. On this happy event, the Vendean peaſantry, laying aſide their arms, ran to furbiſh up their plough ſhares, and reſume the labours of the field; in a very ſhort ſpace of time that deſolated country, covered with freſh crops, preſented more conſoling propects. The honeſt Vendeans at the ſight of their riſing harveſts began to feel deteſtation againſt the inſtigators of this atrocious war, the fruits of which were the demoliſhing and burning their houſes, maſſacring their families, and the loſs of more than four hundred thouſand Frenchmen.

Frenchmen*. Whatever may have been falſely aſſerted at the time, it is certain that ſince they laid down their arms, theſe peaceable huſbandmen have not ceaſed to give to the mother country the ſtrongeſt pledges of their ſincerity and good faith. On being ſolicited ſome months after the treaty to reſume their arms, they conſtantly diſclaimed the enterpriſes of a few reſtleſs diſturbers, and remained unmoved witneſſes of their defeat and their puniſhment. Such was the happy reſult of the wiſdom of the pacificators, to whom France is indebted for its moſt valuable gift, that of perfect union among its citizens. If ſince the treaty of la Jaunaie, ſome embryo ſparks have given occaſion to dread a freſh eruption †, I do not heſitate to affirm that the Vendean peaſantry had no ſhare whatever in theſe freſh inſurrectional movements. The new inſurgents were ſolely compoſed of old chiefs, who finding neither ſafety nor pro-

* See Note, No. XXI.

† Had it not been for the victory which General Andouin gained at Auxbiers on the 13th Brumaire of the year 8, it was much to be feared that civil war would have been rekindled. The inſurgents already muſtered ſix thouſand men, among whom there was hardly any Vendean peaſants; nevertheleſs, the day of the 18th Brumaire contributed more to the extinction of this new flame, than the victory of Aubiers.

tection in their houſes, were compelled to ſeek it in arms; of conſcripts who had taken refuge in the neighbouring departments, and alſo of ſuch as had no viſible means of ſubſiſtence or livelihood. The perſecution, as unjuſt as it was impolitic, which the Directory raiſed againſt the catholic worſhip, may indeed have drawn a few of the Vendean peaſantry into the party of the new inſurgents; but the revolution of the 18th Brumaire, by placing a man admired by all parties at the head of the government, diſſipated in an inſtant, like a thin vapour, all thoſe appearances of inſurrection, and ſince that happy moment the moſt perfect tranquillity has reigned in that country: the Government is every day reaping the fruit of its moderation; the miniſters of the catholic religion, recalled to their duties, conſtantly preach nothing but ſubmiſſion to the laws, ſilencing, by ſuch wiſe conduct, the calumnies which have been raiſed againſt them.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE INTERIOR GOVERNMENT OF THE VENDÉE DURING THE WAR. ANECDOTES OF THE MOST CELEBRATED GENERALS ON EACH SIDE.

BEFORE I conclude this hiſtorical Sketch, I cannot avoid taking a ſhort view of the interior government of the Vendée during the war.

The reader may perhaps imagine that the greateſt confuſion pervaded that country at the time; nevertheleſs, excepting thoſe evils inſeparable from civil war, it may be averred that order was preſerved even in the midſt of diſorder itſelf.

A ſuperior council eſtabliſhed by the chiefs at Chatillon, and directed by the former Biſhop of Agra, was the centre of the whole civil government of the Upper Vendée: with reſpect to

to the lower part*, I am not poſſeſſed of ſufficient information to enter into theſe particulars; but I preſume from what has been related to me, that it was very nearly formed upon the ſame principles, except that it gave to the military a more abſolute power.

The ſuperior council of Chatillon connected the adminiſtrative and judicial organization; it had under its orders, in each commune, a ſub-committee, entruſted with the details and tranſmiſſion of various orders. Theſe committees diſtributed to the ſoldiers who were marching to the army, proviſions, wine, and ammunition; beſides this, they took every week an account of

* Although the biſhop of Agra preſided over the ſuperior council, it is no leſs certain that he was only conſidered by the greateſt part of the Vendean chiefs as a proper inſtrument to rouſe the ſpirit of the people. A celebrated eccleſiaſtic, whom I dare not name, but whom I point out plainly enough to the reader, by ſaying, that the government and the capital ſet the greateſt value on his virtues and talents, was, properly ſpeaking, the ſoul of the civil government of the Vendée; he was ſtrongly ſeconded by Michael Deſeſſarts, a magiſtrate as much eſteemed for his probity as for the extent of his knowledge.—*Note of the Editor.*

The eccleſiaſtic alluded to is the celebrated Abbé Bernier, who took part in the last pacification, and is since rewarded with a biſhopric.—*Note of the Tranſlator.*

all

all capable of bearing arms, named the captains of the different companies, decided on the number of ſoldiers who were to be in active ſervice, and directed their route. In general each pariſh was compoſed of two companies; as ſoon as the orders arrived, one of theſe companies ſet out upon the projected expedition; upon its return home, it was replaced by the other on the firſt freſh order, ſo that each marched only in its turn. It happened, however, ſometimes that both were obliged to be on ſervice: this was principally when the generals dreaded an invaſion of the territory, or when they wiſhed to ſtrike ſome deciſive blow. At the beginning of the war exact diſcipline prevailed in the army*. Every ſoldier detected in pillage, or who demanded more of his landlord than

* The following is the compariſon which Citizen Lequinio makes in his work between the generals of the two parties. If I often quote this author, it is becauſe I am perſuaded his teſtimony cannot be ſuſpected.

"Perfidious generals authoriſed to carry into execution the counter-revolutionary plan of the tyrant (Robeſpierre) to whoſe ſchemes this inteſtine war was neceſſary, proclaimed amneſties which they did not obſerve: pillage, rape, and cruel treatment of all kinds were tolerated by theſe wretches, and even taught by their own example. While theſe diſorders took place, the chiefs of the rebellion had the crafty policy to conceal

than lodging and board, was flogged; but theſe puniſhments were always very rare, and only in the beginning of the inſurrection; towards the concluſion of the war, the Vendean ſhewed as much ardour for pillage as the enemy*. The police of the communes was intruſted to committees; but their deciſions were ſubmitted to the final deciſion of the ſuperior council. With reſpect to military affairs, they were decided in a council of war, compoſed of thirty officers; all the expeditions and projects of attack were decided on by a majority of votes; nevertheleſs, the council generally paid great deference to the

ceal their barbarous and ſanguinary diſpoſitions, in order to gain adherents; they had even the hypocriſy to make a ſhew of moderation, of reſpect for order, of generoſity, &c." *Lequinio, page* 185. I leave the well-informed and eſpecially the impartial reader, to make his own commentary upon this paſſage.

* At the beginning of the war, the Vendean conqueror was ſeen proſtrating himſelf in the churches, and returning thanks to the God of armies; throughout the whole camp a ſingle blaſphemy was not heard: prayer and other different exerciſes of piety always preceded battles. But this good conduct did not laſt long: by degrees, the love of plunder and the thirſt of revenge gained ground in the hearts of the Vendeans, and towards the end of the war they muſtered in their army a conſiderable number of plunderers, who yielded neither in want of diſcipline nor ferocity to their opponents.

advice

advice of Leſcures and Laroche-Jaquelin. I ſhall not enter into further particulars upon this part of the ſubject; what I have juſt ſtated is ſufficient for this outline, and anſwers the purpoſe I originally intended*.

I ſhall finiſh this chapter with ſome account of the generals of the two parties, who diſtinguiſhed themſelves in this war. I ſhall not ſpeak of thoſe who are ſtill alive, fearful of offending the delicacy of ſuch as I might think it right to notice with approbation and applauſe, and of irritating thoſe whom I might have reaſon to blame; each may however be aſſured, that poſterity will one day do juſtice to the talents and humanity of the former, as well as condemn the latter for their incapacity and acts of violence.

* The reader will perhaps learn with pleaſure, that ſome days before the burning of Chatillon the Vendean chiefs had re-organized their civil and military government; D'Elbée retained the title of generaliſſimo, but his authority was counter-balanced by that of Leſcures' father-in-law, the celebrated Donniſſant, formerly a field marſhal, and who had been appointed governor of the Vendée. That general, after having diſtinguiſhed himſelf by his talents in almoſt every battle which was fought during the campaign of 1793, had the misfortune to fall into the hands of his enemies at the battle of Savenay; carried to Angers, he periſhed by the guillotine a few days after.

On the liſt of republican generals who have diſtinguiſhed themſelves in this war, Kleber, Weſtermann, and Hoche, are the moſt remarkable. Theſe three men, of obſcure origin, owed their advancement more to their valour and their merit than to the circumſtances which produced the revolution. Kleber, who had riſen from a common ſoldier to the rank of general, appeared for the firſt time in the Vendée at the head of that brave army of Mentz, to which France was indebted for ſo many victories and the reduction of the inſurgents. His firſt battles were ſo many triumphs, and if that of Torfou in ſome degree checked his rapid progreſs, it did not tarniſh his laurels. The able retreat which Kleber made, purſued by more than forty thouſand Vendeans reſolutely bent upon his ruin, through roads almoſt impracticable, for more than five leagues, far from ſullying his fame, would have been ſufficient to eſtabliſh the reputation of any other general. The ſervices which he rendered to the republic after the paſſage of the Loire, are of ſuch a nature as never to be forgotten. The victory of Savenay ſtamped for ever the fame of that brave commander. Summoned to the banks of the Rhine, he there made a new diſplay of his talents; having laſtly accompanied the greateſt general of the age to Egypt, to gather freſh laurels,

he

he was arreſted in the career of triumph by the hand of an aſſaſſin, and left on the ſhores of the Nile a name reſpected as much by the vanquiſhed, as it was dear to the conquerors.

I have in another place given an account of Weſtermann ; that intrepid general, little verſed perhaps in the military art, but excelling in *coups-de-mains*, did ſingly more miſchiefs to the inſurgents than a whole army. The diverſion that he made at the time of the ſiege of Nantes, by delivering that city, encouraged the diſheartened republicans, and ſhewed them how the Vendée might be ſubdued. If he was afterwards defeated before Chatillon it was becauſe prudence ſeldom accompanies too daring a courage, and becauſe thinking too contemptibly of the enemy before him, he flattered himſelf that with his ſmall army, he was in a ſituation to counterbalance the whole force of his enemies.

That check he nobly repaired, when after the ſecond battle of Chatillon, he even dared, with a handful of men, to undertake the conqueſt of that very city, before which a ſucceſsful army had juſt been making vain attempts. The ſucceſs of an expedition which appeared raſh at beſt, raiſed his reputation

reputation to the higheſt pitch and ſtruck a mortal blow into the Vendée.

The flames of Chatillon lighted on the republican armies, their courage revived, and Chollet very ſoon witneſſed the total ruin of the inſurgents. Reſtored to his army, ſometime after the paſſage of the Loire, he purſued the fugitives who had again become formidable by repeated victories, and although defeated himſelf in ſeveral ſkirmiſhes, he at length totally cruſhed them by the battle of Mans. That celebrated battle was the laſt of his exploits, and the laſt ſtep which led him to the grave. Ordered to Paris by a Nero jealous of his fame, this new Corbulon arreſted, put in priſon, under pretence of a chimerical conſpiracy, ſoon expiated upon a ſcaffold the crime of having ſucceſsfully ſerved his country; a crime which the tyrants of all ages never have learned to forgive.

Hoche was already celebrated for his victories on the Rhine and the Moſelle. When he appeared in the Vendée, the conteſt was drawing to a cloſe; nor had he to reap any of thoſe brillant triumphs which dazzle the eyes of the vulgar and commonly flatter the ſelf-love of generals; but his glory was not leſs ſubſtantial in the eye of the calm obſerver, and

and his prudence gained him more eulogiums, than his courage could have done. His wife and well regulated conduct, under very delicate circumstances, justly procured him the title of the pacificator of the Vendée, and will for ever serve as a model to military chiefs in the same difficult circumstances. Severe with the seditious, mild and humane to the peaceable peasant, he enjoyed the esteem of all the Vendeans, to whom he was at the same time the restorer of religion and peace. In short that celebrated general seemed only to have been sent into the Vendée, to demonstrate that it is often easier to conquer than to take the proper advantage of victory, and that if force can triumph over an enemy, moderation only can disarm him.

The Vendean chiefs, on the other hand, exhibit characters no less astonishing. With soldiers half armed, inexperienced, and almost undisciplined, without any other ammunition or artillery than what they could take from the enemy, without military administrations, without any other money than what they procured from their own revenues, without any kind of credit, without any of those resources which are at this day indispensably necessary to carry on war, they did not hesitate to take the lead in an insurrection, which obliged

obliged them to combat againſt the moſt powerful nation in the world. That war was doubtleſs odious in its origin, and diſadvantageous in its effects; it only tended to convert the Vendée into a heap of ruins and aſhes. But let us ſuppoſe for a moment that their efforts had been aimed againſt our foreign enemies, with what glory would they not have been covered by ſuch a noble defence! Let us then deplore the infatuation of the Vendean chiefs, let us blame their fatal obſtinacy; but let us do juſtice to their talents, and examine with the diſcernment of an impartial hiſtorian what were their abilities and their military defects.

Bonchamps, D'Elbée, and Domagné, in addition to their diſtinguiſhed valour, poſſeſſed talents which they diſplayed but too often to the injury of the republic. There were, however, degrees in their abilities eaſy to be diſcriminated: D'Elbée excelled in forming a plan of attack, Domagné in a *coup de main*, and Bonchamps, ſuperior to the two former in the military art, was the moſt dexterous in repairing a defeat*. Charrette, who, of

* If I may venture to give credit to the teſtimony of ſeveral Vendean chiefs, Bonchamps poſſeſſed more military talents than

of all the Vendean chiefs, gave the moſt employment to the republican forces, poſſeſſed in a ſuperior degree to the three others, that kind of prudence which is very ſeldom found in the head of a party. By ſkilful management, he always contrived to repair his defeats, and even to reap advantage from them. After the paſſage of the Loire, ſurrounded by republicans armies, he ſucceeded in keeping his footing in the country, and ruined the republican diviſions without coming to deciſive engagements. Taking advantage of the miſunderſtandings of his adverſaries, one day he threatened ſome particular diſtrict, and the next day fell upon another; at one time he drew the enemy into the open country, as if he deſigned to give them battle, and in the night he fell upon their rear, cut off a convoy that was their only reſource, and thereby obliged them to fall back upon the frontiers. Beloved by the ſoldiers, and feared by his officers, no general had more abſolute authority, or was better obeyed. A groundleſs jealouſy of the chiefs of the

any of his colleagues! wounded in ſeveral battles, he appeared but ſeldom at the head of armies; it was that which loſt him part of his reputation. I ſhall not undertake to decide upon his character: I leave that to ſuch military men as knew him.

Upper

Upper Vendée, the maſſacre at Machecoul, and ſome other actions of that nature tarniſhed the ſplendor of his military virtues.

Leſcures and Laroche-Jaquelin, rivals and friends in the career of the military profeſſion, formed a ſplendid union of daring courage and ſuperior talents, although no two men were ever of more different characters or more oppoſite tempers. Leſcures, from the weakneſs and apparent effeminacy of his form, ſeemed little fitted for warlike exploits. Laroche-Jaquelin with a ſtrong conſtitution, expreſſive looks, and a warlike countenance, ſeemed born for fighting. The former mild, polite, of an affectionate and tender diſpoſition, ſeemed deſigned by nature to conſtitute the happineſs of his worthy and reſpectable wife, and increaſe the charms of domeſtic and ſocial attachment. Laroche-Jaquelin, on the contrary, with his martial air, his ſharp and laconic way of ſpeaking, ſeemed intended by his very nature to live in the buſtle of a camp: this difference between theſe two warriors was even viſible in the heat of battle. In an engagement where they equally hazarded their lives, it would have been difficult to decide which of the two bore away the palm of valour; but by the

the calm, ſerene, and ſometimes ſmiling countenance of Leſcures, it was eaſy to perceive that he only ſought to animate his ſoldiers; whilſt from the fierce looks of Laroche-Jaquelin, and his animated motions, you might diſtinguiſh the warrior carried away by his impetuoſity. Like Mornai, the philoſopher, Leſcures, in the heat of battle, never ſtained his ſword with the blood of his enemies; humane from natural diſpoſition, and generous in his actions, the diſarmed enemy found in him a brother and protector.

Laroche-Jaquelin devoured, as it were, the enemy with his looks as he fell beneath his ſword; he was alſo deficient in that moderation which can forgive thoſe whom it has vanquiſhed. Leſcures, more ſlow in determination, and more prudent in counſel, combined all the poſſible chances of fortune to arrange an army and enſure it ſucceſs. Laroche-Jaquelin, in the beginning of an engagement, ruſhing with impetuoſity into the enemy's ranks, ſeemed to carry victory by ſurpriſe: the prudence of the former inſpired the Vendeans with more confidence in the moment of attack: the raſhneſs of the latter was more calculated to reanimate their courage at the critical moment of cloſe quarters. The preſence of both rendered

their followers in ſome meaſure invincible: it has alſo been particularly remarked, that they were hardly ever conquered except when ſeparated; and that nothing might be wanting to the difference of character in theſe two warriors, one after having ſeen the ruin of his party, received the mortal blow while endeavouring by his exertions to recal victory; the other, in raſhly purſuing a wretched fugitive, ruſhed to certain death, and fell at a moment in which his loſs inevitably haſtened the deſtruction of his friends. Such was the fate of theſe two great commanders, to whom nothing was wanting to acquire immortal fame, but to have fought againſt the enemies of their country*.

* Beſides the chiefs of the two parties whom I have juſt named, there are many others will certainly not be overlooked by hiſtorians in the liſt of celebrated men who have diſtinguiſhed themſelves in this fatal epocha. Without mentioning thoſe who are ſtill alive, I cannot help regretting that this ſhort view has not admitted of my giving anecdotes of Beyſſer, the Beaupuys, the Marceaus, and alſo of the Marignys, the Beauvoilliers, the Rouarans, &c. who fought on the oppoſite ſide.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER IX.

STATE OF COMMERCE AND AGRICULTURE IN THE VENDÉE, SINCE THE WAR.

I have juſt executed a painful taſk, in giving an hiſtorical ſketch of ſuch bloody cataſtrophes; nor is it without reluctance, that I have entered on the deſcription of ſo many ſhocking occurrences. It is with the greateſt pleaſure, therefore, I now withdraw my attention from objects ſo diſtreſſing towards others of an infinitely more agreeable nature, thoſe of agriculture and commerce. I ſhall examine the progreſſive ſteps which led to their decline in the Vendée, from what cauſes they fell into ruin, and by what means they have been recently reſtored.

The campaign of 1792 greatly injured the commerce of the Vendée; but as theſe troubles broke out late, the ſtate of agriculture was but

little affected. The exportations of that year may be valued at a quarter of the uſual amount, and the Importations at one half. From this calculation it follows that the Vendée was beginning to loſe conſiderably by its commerce.

In 1793, the evil made further progreſs; leſs ſeed was ſown than in the preceding year; the number of perſons employed in the war, and conſequently taken from agriculture, muſt neceſſarily have occaſioned it conſiderable injury. That year's harveſt was reduced alſo to a quarter of the uſual crops. There was hardly any exportation from the Vendée and importations became indiſpenſably neceſſary, although they could hardly be valued at more than a third of the uſual conſumption; money became alſo extremely ſcarce, ſince much was paid, and little or nothing received.

The campaign of 1794, or of the ſecond year, gave the mortal blow to theſe ill fated provinces. When we recollect that the Vendeans had in part paſſed the Loire, and that the remainder, purſued by republican detachments, and ſcattered as it were throughout the country, were compelled to hide

hide themſelves in the woods to ſave their lives; if we conſider that the infernal columns had ſet fire to all the villages and cottages, maſſacred part of the peaſants, burned in their barns or lofts the corn and fodder, killed or devoured more than eleven hundred thouſand oxen, and an innumerable quantity of ewes and ſheep, carried off or deſtroyed all the horſes and mules in the country, conſumed by fire all the wool, linen, hemp, and every kind of moveable, it may eaſily be conceived that the Vendée muſt have been totally ruined*. Agriculture and commerce were annihilated at the ſame time, and if that dreadful ſtate of things had continued a few years, I make no doubt but the Vendeans would have been reduced to the ſituation of American ſavages, and

* Vide Note, page 160.

" Pillage was carried to its higheſt pitch; the military, inſtead of minding their buſineſs, only thought of filling their knapſacks, and endeavouring to perpetuate a war ſo very uſeful to their intereſts; many common ſoldiers acquired fifty thouſand livres and more: ſome were ſeen covered with jewels, and launching into every ſpecies of the moſt ſhameful prodigality. The habit of pillage extended the bad effects of that blameable diſpoſition even to the very patriots themſelves, and their property has in a thouſand inſtances become the prey of the very men ſent to defend them."——*Lequinio*, page 13.

live like them upon the produce of their plunder among the neighbouring people.

Peace at length reſtored tranquillity to the unfortunate Vendée; the third year afforded happier days. On the happy news of peace the peaſant iſſued from the woods which had ſerved him for ſhelter, and fought, beneath the aſhes which covered the ſcite of his former habitation, for the agricultural inſtruments which he had there concealed; but in vain did he attempt to reſume his rural labours. Without ſhelter from the ſeverity of the weather, without cattle to aſſiſt him in his labour, without money to purchaſe ſeed and bread till the next harveſt, he ſaw on every ſide nothing but famine, deſpair, and death.

Agriculture was annihilated without reſource, if the proprietors had not afforded aſſiſtance to their tenants. Although exhauſted by a diſaſtrous war, they made freſh efforts, ſold the moſt valuable effects which they had been able to preſerve, and even diſpoſed of a part of their property, or borrowed at an extravagant intereſt, to rebuild their farms, ſtock them with freſh cattle, and ſupport their unfortunate labourers. The loſs which the proprietors ſuffered was ſo much the more conſiderable

conſiderable, as by ſacrificing a part of their property to preſerve the reſt, they found themſelves not only obliged to forgive the tenants the rents of former years of which they had not received a farthing, but alſo to ſtipulate in the freſh leaſes which they granted, that the farmers ſhould for ſome years pay nothing. So many ſacrifices and loſſes impoveriſhed them to ſuch a degree, that the greateſt part of them were reduced during ſeveral years to ſubſiſt upon the moſt humiliating charity. From what I have ſtated, it muſt eaſily be conceived, that in the third year there was no kind of commerce in the Vendée, and that conſequently the importations and exportations were abſolutely null.

During the fourth year the unfortunate ſituation of the Vendée was far from amelioriated. Whether it was that the peaſants could not work the ground properly, or that the year was naturally barren, the little corn which they had ſown did not ſucceed, and the huſbandman hardly reaped the ſeed which he had thrown into the ground. Compelled to buy for his own conſumption, he ſold one half of the live ſtock which he had bought and the hay intended for the feed of his plough oxen, and went to his neighbours to purchaſe that wheat at a high price,

price, which nature ſeemed to have refuſed him. From what I have ſaid, the reader muſt be convinced, that ſuch a barren year gave the laſt deadly blow to the trade and agriculture of the Vendée. I will venture to aſſert, that at that period fifteen thouſand livres in ſpecie could not have been found throughout the whole country, and the richeſt farmers in it were reduced to beggary. Nothing could preſent a more affecting ſight, than to ſee theſe venerable huſbandmen going by night to the houſes of the proprietors to ſolicit, with tears, aſſiſtance for their ſtarving families: whilſt others, leſs aſhamed, went from door to door among thoſe who were once rich, publicly begging the morſel of bread which was not always granted them; ſo general was the diſtreſs! There is reaſon to believe that the greateſt part of the peaſants would have quitted the country, to go in ſearch of a more productive and leſs injured ſoil, if the proſpect of a moſt plentiful harveſt, promiſing an end to their calamities, had not given them courage to bear up againſt them. The ſo much wiſhed for harveſt of the fifth year at length mitigated the unfortunate ſituation of the Vendeans a little; but it could not make good the loſſes of the preceding year. The farmer had been obliged from diſtreſs to let two thirds of his land lay fallow; he had no more cattle to ſell:

thus

thus all the aſſiſtance he received, was merely ſufficient to keep him from ſtarving, and to raiſe his hopes for the enſuing year.

Hay was almoſt the only article of exportation, and therefore very little ſpecie flowed into the country. The harveſts of the ſixth and ſeventh years were tolerably plentiful; but from the troubles in Normandy, the price of cattle kept very low.*

Theſe prices advanced in the two ſubſequent years eight and nine; and if they continue to keep up for ſome years more, the Vendée may hope to regain a part of its ancient ſplendour. This country is ſtill very far from repairing its loſſes; it begins indeed to riſe from its ruins; but to render it flouriſhing, much more effectual

* There is no province in France whoſe proſperity is more connected with that of the Vendée, than Normandy; theſe two countries ſupply each other; the diſaſters of the one always affect the other: Normandy, which rears but few cattle, takes lean cattle from Poitou, to fatten and ſupply the capital; and on the other hand, the trade of Poitou would languiſh, the moment the Normans ceaſed to frequent their fairs. The war of the Vendée, therefore, was as injurious to the Normans, as that of the Chouans for the Vendeans.

assistance must be given it, than what it has hitherto received. Before we conclude this chapter, I ought to mention the efforts which Government has unremittingly made to repair the disasters of civil war; and although they have hitherto been almost unsuccessful, they do no less honour to its benevolent views.

From the moment the troubles were at an end, the humane pacificators perceived that it was impossible to raise the Vendée without powerful and effectual means. Every thing which had been taken from it it was necessary to replace. But the public treasury was exhausted and could furnish but feeble resources. The first object which struck them was the absolute want of working tools, agricultural instruments, and iron; these were purchased at a high rate in the neighbouring departments, and distributed among the Vendeans; but in this distribution, a capital error was committed, which rendered the assistance almost useless: the commissaries, instead of taking the care of it upon themselves, and delivering them immediately to those for whom they were designed, transferred these secondary concerns to the administrations, and thereby totally failed in their object. In order to obtain

obtain theſe aids, it was neceſſary to make uſe of forms with which the peaſants were unacquainted.

The adminiſtrators unwilling to run any riſks themſelves, were obliged to follow the regulations in the delivery; and Stofflet having again taken arms, they were afraid, or at leaſt pretended to be afraid, that thoſe iron inſtruments might be fabricated into weapons, and turned againſt the Republic. Although the laſt inſurrection had been entirely quelled, they ſold all the utenſils, ploughing inſtruments, and iron which had been long in ſtore for the uſe of the Republic: ſo that ſcarcely the tenth part of theſe articles reached their deſtination.

The ſecond favor which the Vendée received from Government was the remiſſion of the greateſt part of its immediate contributions. This act of juſtice and humanity cannot be too much commended, and ought to excite the gratitude of the Vendeans; but I will maintain that the ableſt financier would not have procured the tenth part of its contributions from ſuch a ruined country: this remiſſion, therefore, had become indiſpenſably neceſſary; and if commerce does not reſtore to the Vendée freſh vigour, it will for many years be difficult for it to proſper without that aſſiſtance.

All the partial means which have hitherto been tried, are ſtill very far from having repaired its diſaſters. I will venture to aſſert, that even to this day there is not a more impoveriſhed country. The principal cauſe of its diſtreſs is without doubt the ſcarcity of money; a ſcarcity owing, as I have already obſerved, to the effects of civil war. If to this leading cauſe be added the entire ruin of commerce, the want of the moſt neceſſary articles of importation, and the local expences and taxes which it was neceſſary to pay, we need not be ſurpriſed at this abſolute ſcarcity.

This inconvenience is ſtill ſo ſtrongly felt in the Vendée, that the tax gatherers, forced to levy by diſtrains and executions, cannot collect the amount of their quotas, without employing a crowd of bailiffs' followers and tipſtaffs, who, ſcattered through the communes, ſeize and ſell, multiplying the expences to ſuch a degree, that if proper regulations are not adopted, they will very ſoon render of no effect all former remiſſions of the payment of taxes granted to the Vendée. I know, and the Vendean farmers know it as well as myſelf, that the neceſſities of the public purſe are preſſing, and that taxes are the nerves of the ſtate: theſe unfortunate peaſants have been

been more than once obliged to drive to the fairs cattle, though eſſentially neceſſary to agriculture, and to ſell them at half the price they might receive two months after, in order to pay their taxes. At no time were they ever heard to complain of it, or murmur: in full confidence they patiently await the moment when the government ſhall turn its attention towards them, and take pity on their unfortunate ſituation.

Such are the actual facts which I ſubmit to its conſideration, and whatever may have been inſinuated to the contrary, I am not afraid that I ſhall be taxed with exaggeration.

SUPPLEMENT

SUPPLEMENT

TO THE

HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

VENDÉE.

CHAPTER I.

LANGUAGE OF THE VENDEANS.

THE Vendée, like every other department at a diſtance from the capital, has a dialect peculiar to itſelf, and which would not be underſtood at ten leagues from its own borders. It is in a great meaſure compoſed of corrupted Latin and French, of ſome Engliſh and Celtic words, and

of

of a few others, the derivations of which I have been unable to aſcertain, but which I imagine to be of Scythian origin. Although the Vendeans are extremely attached to this jargon, the generality of them underſtand French, and ſeveral ſpeak it purely enough; but the greater part of them refrain from expreſſing themſelves in pure language, that they may avoid expoſing themſelves to the raillery of their neighbours, who would not fail to joke them on their ſpeaking *noblat*; which is the expreſſion they uſe in that country to ſignify the French language. One rule which appears to be generally adopted in this jargon, is the changing and corrupting the greater part of the verbs, eſpecially the laſt perſon of the preſent tenſe. Thus inſtead of *ils aiment, ils peuvent, ils font*, the Vendeans ſay *i-z-aimant, i-peuziant, i-faiſiant.* The demonſtrative pronouns, *celle-ci, celle-là*, are expreſſed by *quioqui* and *qualla.* The Vendean, for *qu'eſt-ce quil y a?* ſay, *qué quou iat?* the evening, with them is termed *la reſciée*; twelve hours, *une rabbinée*; *rabbiner*, is alſo a verb, which ſignifies *to follow.* They have a multiplicity of other verbs entirely unknown to the French language, ſuch as *ſe mâcher* inſtead of *ſe mêler*, *épiter* for *ſuffire*, *hobber* for *partir*, &c. &c. The ſecond of theſe verbs appears to me to be derived from the latin word

word *explere*; but I do not know from whence the others come. The particle *on* is entirely unknown to them. I may obſerve on this ſubject that this particle is ſeldom uſed except in the French language; in every other they make uſe of the periphraſis: to expreſs *on dit*, they ſay in Latin *dicitur*, in Italian, *ſi dice*, in Spaniſh, *ſe dize*, *il eſt dit*. The Engliſh alſo regularly make uſe of the periphraſis, as *ils diſent*, *they ſay*. It appears that theſe laſt have ſerved as a model to the Vendeans. It is true they add the word *autres* which they pronounce *outres*; the Vendean therefore expreſſes the words *on dit*, thus: *i diziant les outres*. The ſame periphraſis is every where uſed by them, where it is neceſſary to ſupply the particle *on*. They murder the greater part of our dipthongs in a very unpleaſant way to the ear; they pronounce *honneur*, *onure*; *chapeau*, *chapais*; *loi*, *loué*; and other words in the ſame manner. They very often ſubſtitute the firſt perſon ſingular of a perſonal pronoun for that of the plural, and very often alſo the ſubſtantive for the adjective: for inſtance, inſtead of *nous avons été victorieux de nos ennemis*, they ſay *j'avons eu le vaincure ſur noutre almi*. They have alſo a multiplicity of ſubſtantives which are not only unknown in the French language, but which cannot be explained without a periphraſis. I ſhall give one inſtance; in order to

expreſs *de quoi manger*, they make uſe of the ſubſtantive *commentage* or *quoi-mentage*; thus they ſay: *j'avons ben prou de pain, mais je manquons de commentage.*

Another cuſtom which they have, and which renders their converſation ſilly and diſagreable, is the repetition at the end of every ſentence of the pronoun *moi*, which they pronounce *mais*. To expreſs *je le veux*, they ſay, *é-i-ou lou veu mais.* I ſhall conclude theſe obſervations on the Vendean language by a droll anecdote which was occaſioned by the repetition of the word *moi*.

Some years ago, a Vendean, being ill at the Hoſpital of Douay, was endeavouring to explain to the matrons who ſuperintend the houſe, that he wanted to take the air, and was always calling out: *é-i-ou veu prendre larre mais* (l'armée); theſe good women ſuppoſing he meant that he would go into the army, thought him delirious, and paid no attention to his cries. In the mean time the ſick man was reſtleſs in his bed, quite out of temper, and requeſting day and night to take *larre mais*. The following day was market day: one of the nurſes, quite tired out with the continual cries of the ſick man, went to enquire if there was not

not a native of Gâtine in the town. She was lucky enough to find one whom ſhe immediately took to the hoſpital. As ſoon as the Vendean heard the cries of his countryman, he ſhrugged up his ſhoulders with compaſſion, and obſerved in his jargon that nothing could be plainer than the ſick man's requeſt. "What does he want then?" ſaid the nurſe. —*Pargoi! il veut prendre* larre-li (*l'air, lui*).— After this reply, the Gâtinean, thinking he had ſufficiently explained himſelf, went away immediately to attend his buſineſs; they ran after him and enquired what *larre-li* ſignified. Tired with ſo many explanations, the angry Vendean ran to his countryman's bed-ſide, took him on his ſhoulders, put him down into the middle of the court, and went away muttering, that there was nothing ſo queer as thoſe drolls of town nurſes who pretend to be deaf becauſe they won't hear.

CHAPTER II.

OF THEIR PRIVATE QUALITIES.

THE Vendeans in general are good fathers, good ſons, and good huſbands. Adultery and the greater part of the ſhameful vices are unknown among them. The civil war, however, has ſingularly altered their morals. The old ſoldiers, accuſtomed to live in licentiouſneſs, upon their return home retained part of their bad habits; and had it not been for the care and zeal of the miniſters of the catholic perſuaſion, there was reaſon to fear that they would have corrupted the national character. It is therefore from reſpect for the religion of his forefathers, that the Vendean is indebted for his ſtill remaining virtuous. His worſt habit, is drinking; and hitherto no exhortation or other means, have ſucceeded in correcting that fatal propenſity: the public houſe, therefore now

now is, and is likely to be for ſome time, the only ſource of the few diſputes and domeſtic quarrels which take place in the Vendée.

In the courſe of this work I have had occaſion to ſpeak of their honeſty, their loyalty, and their other virtues. I ſhall only add, that they have a decided averſion to law ſuits: the few miſunderſtandings they have are eaſily ſettled by arbitrators; they ſeldom have recourſe to attornies; and when they are compelled to it, it is with the greater repugnance, as they have a maxim among them, that none of their ſaints were ever lawyers.

Their religious aſſemblies preſent to the obſerver the moſt edifying ſpectacle imaginable; and I am perſuaded, that throughout all France, the catholic church has not more zealous adherents or believers attached to its doctrine.

The Vendean is very hoſpitable; if chance or bad weather lead a traveller to his cottage; he will chearfully ſet before him the little refreſhments he may have in the houſe, and will conſider it as an affront if he offers to pay for them. In general they have an affected ſimplicity, which the traveller muſt be aware of taking for real; ſtrangers will take

a Vendean

a Vendean for a ſilly fellow, while at the ſame time he is amuſing himſelf with them: they term this kind of joke *la gouaille* : they are very much given to it, and even *gouaillent* upon the graveſt occaſions. This pretended ſimplicity often gives riſe to witty and original ſallies. The reader will allow me to give him one of theſe anecdotes.

A Vendean having killed a hare, determined to carry it to his maſter who lived in the neighbouring town; but before he went to the intended place, he called at a ſhoemakers with whom he had ſome buſineſs. The latter wiſhing to ſpeak with him in private, aſked him to go into his back-ſhop; the Vendean conſented, laid his bag down, and followed him. In the mean time the ſhoemaker's boys opened the bag and took out the hare, putting in its place a cur-dog which had died over night. The Gâtinean returned and without diſcovering the trick which had been played him, throws his bag over his ſhoulder and haſtens to his maſter, whom he found at table with ſome friends. After the firſt compliments were over, he acquainted him with his ſucceſs in hunting, and of the nature of the preſent he had come to make him. While the maſter was loading him with thanks, the countryman, with a gay and ſmiling countenance,

countenance, untied his bag, and holding the ſuppoſed hare by the ears, exhibited his head to the company. The roar of laughter that followed may be eaſily imagined: "How is this, Thomas," ſaid the maſter, "is that the preſent you have to make me"? The diſconſolate countryman anſwered not a word; at laſt turning the cur's head about, and examining it in all directions very carefully, "*Parguenne*," exclaimed he, *t'as biau faire ta mine de chin, tu n'en es pas moins un lièvre dà**.

* Ay ay, thou may'ſt make thy dog's face if thou will, thou arn't leſs a hare for all that.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER III.

OF THEIR DIVERSIONS.

THE amuſements of the Vendeans are as ſimple as their manner of living. On Sundays and ſaint's days, after ſervice, they play at bowls on the road ſides, a game at which they excel: not far off, in a buſh, they place a few bottles of wine, as the prize of victory, which the loſers are obliged to pay.

The ſeldom eat at each other's houſes; that only happens when they kill their hogs: they then give feaſts to their neighbours, termed *les rilles*. The following is the ceremony which they obſerve: in the morning they play at bowls; then dance after dinner; at night they ſit down to table, but it is

is at ſupper that the Vendean gaiety exhibits itſelf amidſt flowing cans and pitchers. At the cloſe of the meal, an orator, ſomewhat tipſy, gets upon a table, calls for ſilence, and in a truly comic ſtile delivers ſome ſpeech or droll ſermon that he had learned when young, and which the company often interrupts with roars of laughter.

I once attended one of theſe feaſts out of curioſity: the orator took for his text, "*Bonum vinum lætificat cor hominis*". Good wine maketh glad the heart of man. In the firſt place he endeavoured to ſhew all the advantages that we derive from wine; in the ſecond, he enlarged upon all the vices and evils of which it is the ſource: the concluſion was a bumper which all the company was obliged to drink. A ſecond ſpeaker ſucceeded the firſt, and took for his text, "*Omnis homa mortalis*," Every man is mortal. One Michael Morin, a ſexton by profeſſion, was the hero of this diſcourſe; he was wittily compared to the greateſt potentates of antiquity, and it was demonſtrated that Michael Moran ſurpaſſed all heroes both ancient and modern. It appeared to me that the moral of it was, that we ought to ſuſpect the reputation of pretended heroes; that

men are eſſentially the ſame, and that a conqueror who does injury to his fellow creatures is inferior to the ſexton who does his duty. Theſe ſpeeches upon the whole did not appear to want wit, though disfigured by the Vendean jargon; I am ignorant what new Rabelais is the author.

The Vendeans have another game, which I believe is peculiar to themſelves, and is of very old date, although very little practiſed at this day, on account of the quarrels it ſometimes gives riſe to; I ſaw an inſtance of it ſome years ago; the following is the nature of it. Two pariſhes or neighbouring communes challenge each other to a trial of their reſpective ſtrength: they commonly bet a hogſhead of wine, which is paid for by the vanquiſhed, and drank at the termination of the combat by both parties.

On the day fixed by the challengers, the two communes repair to a meadow, or a very extenſive field: they chuſe on both ſides an equal number of ſtrong men; they draw a line of demarcation, and then extend a great cable, which each champion on both ſides lays hold of with both

both his hands, and draws with all his might towards his own ſide. That party which pulls the other over the line, gains the victory. They then make a common repaſt, at which the wine flows very copiouſly. The vanquiſhed then file off to their reſpective villages, leaving their adverſaries maſter of the field, who finiſh the day by dancing arm in arm, and ridiculing without mercy the conquered in their ſongs.

CHAPTER IV.

STATE OF THE ARTS AND SCIENCES IN THE VENDÉE.

THERE is no department in France where public inſtruction and the liberal arts are more neglected than in the Vendée. In ſuch an extenſive country there is not a ſingle college, drawing, dancing, or muſic maſter; ſchoolmaſters are even very ſcarce there, and the greateſt part of them can only read printed books, and not writing. Let it not be ſuppoſed, that the civil war is the cauſe of this ſtate of ignorance; before that fatal period, knowledge was equally rare in that country.

A man, therefore, who can read and write tolerably well, paſſes for a learned man in the opinion

nion of a Vendean peaſant; and in more than one Commune, they have often been at a loſs to chuſe a mayor and his aſſiſtant, becauſe they could not find two men who could write their own names. This ſtate of ignorance ariſes without doubt, from there never having been a town in all that country worthy of being ſo called. The Vendée, properly ſpeaking, is only a collection of villages, without any common center; and in this view, it may be compared to a vaſt body having many arteries without a heart.

After what I have juſt ſtated, it is not ſurpriſing that the Vendeans labour under the groſſeſt ignorance. This apathy is ſo much the more to be regretted, as the greater part of the inhabitants have the happieſt turn for particular arts, and even for the abſtract ſciences.

I have known ſeveral whoſe natural talents were aſtoniſhing. In a village near Breſſuire, there lives a common weaver who, without any maſter, has learned to read and write well, and acquired the four common rules in arithmetic, Fractions, and the Rule of Three. Beſides this, he underſtands every thing relating to eccleſiaſtical computation, the

the Solar Cycle, the Roman Indiction, the Golden Number, &c.; he has even compoſed a work upon that ſubject, which though badly written appeared to me very exact. Another countryman of the ſame diſtrict, a cartwright by profeſſion, has made a clock extremely complicated, which I have at this moment in my poſſeſſion. This piece of machinery has aſtoniſhed all the profeſſional men who have ſeen it; although the wheels are very clumſy, it went extremely well during the inventor's life, as he came from time to time to regulate and to keep it in order. I muſt alſo confeſs that ſince his death no watchmaker has been able to regulate it; the uſual fate of this ſort of work. This machine indicated the hours, the minutes, the day of the month, and the quarter of the moon: it ſerved alſo as a village clock, by the means of a braſs wire fixed to a hammer ſuſpended over a bell at the top of the houſe.

In the ſame proportion that the Vendeans are qualified for the abſtract ſciences, I conſider them incapable of literature and the fine arts; the mechanical even are very much neglected. There is hardly any thing ſeen in the Vendée, but

but weavers, carpenters, maſons, cartwrights, and carpenters: they have recourſe, for the other profeſſions to the neighbouring towns. With reſpect to the fine arts, they are entirely unknown, or rather, they have no taſte whatever for them. Place one of Raphael's fineſt paintings before them, with a clumſy daub of ſome alehouſe painter, and they would not know the difference; that which has the moſt glaring colours would be the piece they would prefer. Haydn's or Mozart's beſt airs, would appear inſipid to them, compared to their monotonous tunes; and the jumping of a Merry Andrew, would divert them much more than the fineſt dance of the opera. With reſpect to their poetry, I know only of a few ſongs, in which there is neither wit, rhyme nor reaſon, and which one would ſuppoſe had been compoſed in the time of William Tête-d'Etoupes, or of Foulques-le-Rechin.

During the war, the Vendeans animated each other to battle, by military ſongs, which were like thoſe that I have juſt mentioned; but their chiefs and officers had others very well compoſed, and written by much more able hands.

A ſmall

A ſmall number of literary characters may, however, be found in the Vendée, whom the revolutionary troubles brought back to their native places. Theſe men, diſtinguiſhed by their talents and learning, preferring ſtudy and retirement to the vain purſuits of dangerous ambition, diſdain to make themſelves known, and devote the time which they can ſpare from ſtudy to the happineſs and inſtruction of their fellow citizens.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER V.

DRESS OF THE VENDEANS.

THE Vendean dreſs is very ſimple. The men wear a round hat with ſhallow crown and broad brim: their hair is cut and curled like the prieſts. They wear a coat of a greyiſh blue coloured woolen ſtuff in the Upper Vendée, and of brown in other places, under which, they have a white waiſtcoat of thick woolen cotton, kept cloſe to the body by a girdle; add to this dreſs, a large pair of ſtriped breeches, and a pair of clumſy ſhoes, ſhod with iron, and you will have a complete idea of the Sunday dreſs of a Vendean. The women's head dreſs, is an ell of ribband, twiſted in a groteſque manner about their heads; they wear a jacket of blue ſtuff, which covers an enormous pair of ſtays that reach up to their ſhoulders, and which is ſo fortified with whale-

bone, that in caſe of neceſſity, it would blunt the edge of a ſabre; two woolen petticoats, a pair of blue ſtockings, wooden ſhoes, and a great black cloak, loaded with ribbons of the ſame colour, and tied before with ſilver claſps, complete this dreſs, than which nothing, as may eaſily be conceived, can be leſs favourable to beauty. Indeed the Vendée is very far from being remarkable for fine women; fifty ugly may be found for one that is tolerable; but they make up for this defect by ſo many good qualities, that they have no reaſon to complain of Providence for their ill favouredneſs.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER VI.

THEIR WEDDINGS.

ALTHOUGH love appears under rather coarſe forms in the Vendée, modeſty nevertheleſs preſerves its empire. In general the Vendean married women go virgins to the nuptial bed, and there ſeldom is an inſtance, as in moſt of our towns, of a girl claiming at the altar the title of wife, which ſhe has previouſly diſhonoured by the fruits of premature love. It is chiefly at their balls, known by the name of aſſemblies, that the attachments between the Vendean youth of both ſexes are formed. Theſe kind of balls are given on Sundays in the open air; in the morning they treat their ſervants; the evening is entirely devoted to dancing and pleaſure. The mode of making love in that country is ſomething

of

of the cat kind. The moſt common piece of gallantry is to pinch the girls, untie their aprons, twiſt their arms, tumble them, and ſometimes ſteal a hearty kiſs. The girls, on their ſide, anſwer theſe marks of kindneſs by ſlaps and fiſty-cuffs, which the gallants conſider as ſo many favours. When the parents have conſented and the promiſe is given, they invite to the wedding all the brothers, uncles, and couſins on both ſides, and they are on theſe occaſions ſo numerouſly attended, that more than a hundred gueſts are ſometimes reckoned at a wedding. On the day appointed for the ceremony, the bride is dreſſed by young maidens, who put on her a head dreſs with very long lappets hanging down to her ſhoulders. Over this head dreſs is fixed a garland of evergreens; they then put round her a ſaſh of ribbon, which in certain diſtricts, the bridegroom alone is permitted to untie. The latter is generally dreſſed in new clothes, and takes great pains in powdering his hair; it is the only day in his life he can venture to do it, without being laughed at. When every thing is ready for the ceremony, the proceſſion moves to the church. Two young girls carry before the bride, one a white thorn, ornamented with ribbons, fruits, and even ſweet meats; and the other, a diſtaff with a ſpindle. Her godfather carries

carries to the church a cake which the prieſt bleſſes, and of which the bride afterwards does the honour at the deſert.

I ſhall remark on this ſubject, that the greateſt part of our *beaux eſprits* who laugh at theſe reſpectable cuſtoms, are very far from being aware, that they are of very ancient date, and that in general, they have ſome moral end in view. The Roman weddings were not unlike thoſe of the Vendée. They alſo preſented the new married couple with a cake of new wheaten bread, which was previouſly bleſſed by the prieſt, to ſignify to them by this mutual and ſacred food, the unalterable union which ought to ſubſiſt between them. They alſo introduced at the ceremony the diſtaff and ſpindle, to intimate to the young wife, that ſhe ought to employ herſelf in the duties of her ſex at home, and not run after vain amuſements. The white thorn, in the midſt of five torches, with which they attended her from her father's houſe, was the ſymbol of the cares of marriage, which a pure and lively flame would alone diſpel. This is the true moral tendency of theſe cuſtoms, which are only turned into ridicule in theſe days, becauſe their meaning

is

is not underſtood. I ſhall further obſerve, that the cake, of which I ſpeak, was termed in Latin, *conforreatio*, and that ſince the time of Scipio Naſica, they confined the uſe of it to the marriages of prieſts and pontiffs.

When the ceremony is finiſhed, they go from the church to the place where the wedding feaſt is prepared, amidſt the ſounds of fifes and violins, and eſpecially of the ſongs and ſhouts of the gueſts; ſhouts, which bring to the recollection thoſe of the Roman weddings: *ia hymen, O Hymenée!*

The tables are generally ſerved with more profuſion than delicacy; and the mirth of the gueſts is ſo noiſy, that it ſometimes offends chaſte ears. At the deſert, the young girls gather round the bride, and ſing ſocial verſes to her, preſenting her at the ſame time, with a thorn. The meaning of this ſong is, that her happy days are paſt, that ſhe may bid adieu to every pleaſure, and prepare to encounter many ſorrows. It is uſual for the bride to cry during this ceremony, and indeed I muſt confeſs, that it is it not calculated to inſpire cheerfulneſs.

After

After the ſong of the thorn, the *momons* come forward; this word I believe is derived from *momus*.

It is a kind of challenge that a young villager gives to the bride, to gueſs what he has concealed in a baſket. This baſket generally contains a turtle dove, or ſome other tame bird, ornamented with ribbons, of which the *momon* makes a preſent to the bride: three livres was formerly paid for this preſent; but they now merely invite the *momon* to the table, which invitation does not require being repeated.

I ſhould have obſerved that it is the rule for the bridegroom only to ſit down to table when the deſert comes on: during dinner time, with a napkin under his arm, he is buſied in waiting upon the gueſts. I conſider this cuſtom as an ancient relic of French politeneſs. After dinner, dancing begins, and continues till ſupper time. During the deſert, the bride's neareſt relation ſlips under the table and takes off one of her garters and a ſhoe: after many jokes, the garter is cut into bits and diſtributed among the gueſts, and the ſhoe is redeemed by a piece of money. During this part of the ceremony, the bride's eldeſt

eldeſt unmarried ſiſters ſpin coarſe flax with a diſtaff; and the bridegroom's brothers are obliged to make a faggot of brambles; it appears by this cuſtom, that the intention is to puniſh them for having let their younger brother or ſiſter get the ſtart of them, and for not having yet paid their debt to ſociety. Towards three or four o'clock in the morning, the wedded pair privately withdraw from the company, and retire to ſome diſtant houſe. As ſoon as the gueſts diſcover it, they go in ſearch of them, and always find them out. One of the parties give them an onion ſoup, and the others a plate of aſhes, but I am ignorant of the meaning of this cuſtom. It is uſual for the pair to eat their ſoup, then to get up, and rejoin the company. It ſometimes however happens, that the bride grows angry at this unſeaſonable interruption, overſets the ſoup, and throws the aſhes by handfuls in the eyes of the intruders; but this is very ſeldom the caſe, and gives a bad prognoſtic of the wife's future temper in her domeſtic conduct.

The wedding laſts as long as there is any wine in the barrel conſecrated to this feſtival; he who drinks the laſt glaſs, ties a ſtring to the

the fauſet, and puts it on his hat; this is the ſignal for breaking up: every one departs, and the wedding is over, to the great ſatisfaction of the young married folks, who with heartfelt pleaſure, ſee their noiſy gueſts reel off, after having undergone their round of pleaſantry, and ſometimes impertinence.

CHAPTER VII.

OF CONJURERS.

THERE are very few provinces in France, where conjurers are more in faſhion than in the Vendée. There are men in this country who have no other profeſſion; they are known as ſuch, ſpoken to with great precaution, and great care is always taken never to turn the back to them; if a conjurer's hand touches your ſhoulder, you are ſure to be bewitched. The only remedy in ſuch a caſe, is to return him ſmartly the blow which he has given you, after which, there is nothing to fear.

Rain, hail, thunder, and almoſt every meteor, are under the controul of the conjurers; properly ſpeaking, it is they who give rain and fine weather,

weather. Their power extends ſtill further: it is to them that recourſe is had when any property is loſt; it often happens, that this method is ſucceſsful, and this roguery brings the conjurer more into vogue than ever.

Strange ſtories are told throughout the country of the conjurers, which no body doubts, and which are conſidered as articles of faith.

The diſeaſes of men and cattle are attributed to them. As ſoon as the Vendean perceives one of his family attacked with ſome unknown illneſs, inſtead of calling in the phyſician, he runs to the conjurer, and beſeeches him to heal the ſick perſon; at the ſame time, preſenting him with money to induce him to be favourable. If the ſick perſon recovers, the credit of it is given to the conjurer; in the oppoſite caſe, he paſſes for a very uncivil man; they ſay to him, with Chicanneau to Petit-Jean in the *Plaideurs*:

Hé! rendez donc l'argent;
Le monde eſt devenu, ſans mentir, bien méchant.

But for ſome years back the conjurers have loſt part of their reputation. The well informed men of the country have ſo much ridiculed and provoked

provoked the conjurers with impunity, that the peaſants begin to doubt their power.

The objection to their preternatural power, drawn from the circumſtance of the lottery, appears to be that which has the moſt weight. In fact, the peaſants eaſily conceive, that if a conjurer could gueſs the numbers which were to come out on ſuch a day, they would have made their fortunes long ago; whereas the greater part of them, far from being rich, are in a ſituation very little ſhort of wretchedneſs.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER VIII.

NATURAL HISTORY.

THE Vendée has no quadrupeds, birds, reptiles, or even plants which are peculiar to its climate. Its breed of mules, however, may be conſidered as the beſt in France; its fat oxen and ſheep poſſeſs likewiſe a decided ſuperiority over thoſe of the neighbouring departments. It is alſo very well known that the vipers of Lower Poitou, were formerly very much in requeſt for the manufacture of Venice treacle; ſince the revolution, that trade has entirely ceaſed. The country abounds very much in game, eſpecially in hares and red partridges; theſe latter are conſidered as the beſt in France. As the Vendée

is

R

is, in a great meaſure, covered with trees and wood, carnivorous animals and birds of prey are ſo common there, that they lay waſte, and do conſiderable damage to the farmers.

Among the former are wolves and foxes; whatever rewards have been offered by government to the deſtroyers of wolves, they multiply to ſuch a pitch, that they are often ſeen in bodies of from ſix to eight, attacking and tearing to pieces whole herds of oxen. The only means that government can make uſe of to prevent the total ruin of agriculture is, to incite the Vendeans to make a more active war againſt them: the mayors might be authoriſed for ſome months, to call out a third of the inhabitants, and have a general hunt on the ſame day. The abſentee who does not ſend a ſubſtitute ſhould be fined. It is beſides evident, that in adopting this meaſure, a ſtop would be put to that ſyſtem of ſearching for arms, and authoriſing parties to carry them, which at this moment only tends to ſow diſtruſt, awaken individual animoſities, induce the peaſant to conceal his gun, and which in the end does not procure the republic a ſingle muſket.

The

The moſt common birds of prey are the hawk, the bittern, the buſtard (*milvus ærugi-noſus*), hobby, the bark-flayer, the owl, the ſcreech owl (*hulula*), the little owl, and the night owl (*noctua*).

The trees which appear the moſt congenial to the climate of the Vendée, are the oak, the elm, the aſh, the poplar (*populus alba*), the cheſ-nut tree, the wild pear, and the apple tree. Few countries poſſeſs ſo many medicinal plants; but excepting ſome particular kinds, I conſider them as very inferior to thoſe in the provinces of Niort and Thouars, which are opener and drier ſoils.

The ſoil of the Vendée in general conſiſts of nothing but red and black ſand, which, however is not wanting in fertility: there are alſo ſome tracts of clay land, and others of a ſpungy quality, the taſte of which is bitter, and the colour black. There are no where any marly beds, nor of thoſe whitiſh lands which are the baſis of the Epſom and Sedlitz ſalts, which chymiſts term *magneſia*. The firſt ſoil which I have mentioned, is covered with a ſpecies of ſtony

ſtony heaps, which at a diſtance might be miſtaken for tombs; theſe ſtones are of a greyiſh and ſhining colour, and are excellent for building.

The country contains but few coal mines, and thoſe of very little conſequence.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER IX.

PRINCIPAL MEANS OF THE RESTORATION OF THE VENDÉE.

THE following truths may be conſidered as political axioms :

I. Subſiſtence is the ſource of population.

II. Subſiſtence has two baſes: agriculture and trade.

III. There muſt be ſuitable modes of diſpoſing of the produce of theſe two branches.

IV. Without canals, without navigable rivers, and without high roads, there can be little or no commerce.

V. The increaſe of commerce has always raiſed the price of lands, and conſequently given new life to agriculture.

VI. Government ought always to expend its money, by way of aids in thoſe places where the receipt is deficient or in arrears.

VII. When it becomes neceſſary to compel the payment of taxes, it is a ſure ſign that the taxes are too heavy, or that there are abuſes in the collection.

VIII. There are no purſes from which we can be always taking, without putting ſomething in again.

IX. Uncultivated lands are ſo many loſſes to the ſtate.

X. The ſecondary agents of government, ought always to be placed in the centre of the country which they ſuperintend.

I requeſt the reader to examine theſe political axioms, and to feel their force, as it is preciſely upon theſe principles, that the ſyſtem which I am about

about to lay down is founded. If the bounds which I have preſcribed to myſelf, permitted me to enter into details, I might treat of theſe axioms ſeparately, and ſupport them by a long train of reaſoning; but I conſider this method as unneceſſary for candid minds; and with reſpect to thoſe of an oppoſite deſcription, I aſſure them it is not for ſuch that I write. I am further aware, that the plan which I am about to propoſe, will find many enemies; it is in oppoſition to too many paſſions and intereſts, not to excite a croud of gainſayers: but I appeal beforehand to impartial reaſon, and the decided voice of the general welfare: if they are liſtened to, my plan cannot fail of ſucceſs, and the Vendée has gained its cauſe.

Among the means which I am about to propoſe, there are ſecondary ones which might indeed be attended with ſalutary effects, but which cannot ſtrike at the root of the evil. This end is to be attained only by general means: I ſhall begin with theſe latter, reſerving myſelf to reply to the objections which might be urged, till I have explained them.

The firſt of theſe means is, beyond all diſpute, to eſtabliſh in the centre of the Vendée, the prefecture, the central ſchool, and other eſtabliſhments of that nature.

The ſecond, is to render the Thoué navigable, and even the Sèvre-Nantaiſe; I have been informed, that this river can be made ſo at ten leagues from its mouth.

The third, is to make two great roads, croſſing each other at right angles at the point, which I ſhall hereafter name: the firſt ſhould lead from Poitiers to Nantes, paſſing by Parthenay, upon the banks of the Sèvre, and to Chollet; the ſecond ſhould lead from Thouars to Sables-d'Olonne, paſſing the point ſituated on the Sèvre juſt mentioned, to Châteigneraie and Fontenay.

The fourth, is to give freſh activity to the ports of Poitou, to draw ſtrangers thither by open fairs, and by permitting the free exportation of woolens, linens, cattle, ſalt, and even corn.

Each of theſe means require explanation, and I ſhall attempt to do it in few words, depending upon

upon the indulgence, impartiality and candor of my readers.

Agreeably to one of the axioms which I have juſt laid down, it is eſſential to public proſperity, that the ſecondary agents of government ſhould reſide in the centre of the countries which they ſuperintend. Excepting a few diſtricts of the Lower Vendée, which border upon Fontenay, that country has the juſteſt reaſon to make remonſtrances. In an extent of more than three hundred ſquare leagues, it does not poſſeſs any eſtabliſhment, any high road, or any canal; nor any of thoſe regenerating means, ſo liberally laviſhed upon neighbouring cities. In the ſame proportion that the Vendée has to thank nature for the bounties which ſhe has laviſhed upon it, it has a right to complain of the neglect of ſucceſſive governors, who have all appeared to treat it with contempt up to the preſent day. It will certainly be matter of ſurpriſe for poſterity, that in ſo extenſive a ſpace, in the midſt of one of the richeſt countries in France, no man of genius has yet thought of building a town, for we cannot reaſonably apply that name to miſerable villages, which alone have hitherto covered it. If the prodigal Lewis XIV. who expended ſo many millions

millions in building Verſailles, the Invalids, and ſo many uſeleſs palaces; if his no leſs extravagant grandchildren, though ſinking under the weight of the public debt, erected Coliſæums, Pantheons, and other expenſive buildings; if theſe princes, I ſay, had devoted the hundredth part of the ſums, which theſe ſumptuous and vaſt monuments coſt them, in giving vigour to agriculture in the provinces, in building towns, eſtabliſhing manufactories and other works of that kind, they would not only have rendered France the moſt flouriſhing empire in Europe, but they would alſo have ſaved her ſome part of thoſe political ſhocks, which have coſt her ſo much blood and treaſure.

Further, let it not be thought that kings alone have been guilty of this odious extravagance: have we not ſeen the Jacobins in their delirium devote millions to the manufacturing their pikes, ſo much vaunted, with which, as they aſſerted, they would overturn the thrones of Europe; theſe Jacobins, who in the end became the ſubject of ridicule*! How many prevailing factions have we not

* Had the Jacobins been ſubjects only of ridicule, liberty would not have had ſo much reaſon to complain. With whatever

not ſeen erecting monuments, which were pulled down the day after by a more powerful party? If we calculate the expences of the apotheoſis of Marat, and others no leſs ludicrous fooleries, the ſpoils of palaces, and the manſions of the richeſt men in France, we cannot avoid lamenting over the miſchiefs which have been perpetrated, and the good that might have been done; in a word, we muſt confeſs, that if divine Providence did not conſtantly watch over its own work for its preſervation, human madneſs would have long ago overſet the world, and replunged it in its ancient chaos. I hope the reader will excuſe this digreſſion, which is indeed but too much connected with the ſubject of which I am treating, and to which I now return.

I have before obſerved, that there were no eſtabliſhments in the Vendée; it is notorious, that there is no one country in France, which has a greater and better founded right to complain of this neglect. It would be too prolix and tedious to give a topographical view of all the departments of which the Vendée makes a part: I ſhall there-

whatever contempt their arguments may have been treated, the ſharpneſs of their pikes has been very ſenſibly felt.——*Note of the Tranſlator.*

fore

fore confine myſelf to the deſcription of that in which I reſide, (the two Sèvres) which includes in its circuit, the diſtricts of Breſſuire, Aubiers, and Chatillon; in a word, the half of the Upper Vendée.

If we examine the ſituation of the chief town of this department, it will be ſeen that nothing could be worſe choſen. The department of the two Sèvres, hemmed in on the ſouth and weſt ſides by the neighbourhood of thoſe of the Vendée and the Lower Charente, may be ſaid to reſemble the form of an acute angle*. This form once granted, I aſk every man of good ſenſe, whether it is juſt, inſtead of fixing the central point in the broadeſt part, and at equal diſtances from its ſides, to place it exactly at the point of interſection of the angle of which I have juſt ſpoken. Such however is the poſition of Niort, the chief ſpot of this department. In order to aſcertain the truth of what I aſſert, government has only to caſt a glance upon the map of the

* Its form is that of an irregular polygon; but as the chief town is ſituated at the point of interſection of one of its angles, I maintain that it may be conſidered under the ſhape which I have mentioned.

country,

country, and it will readily perceive the injuſtice of this choice, againſt which the northern diſtricts have ſo long and loudly exclaimed.

I know that the inhabitants of Niort have conſtantly evinced their attachment to the revolution, and that they deſerve attention: but would they wiſh to ſacrifice the general intereſt to thoſe conſiderations? I cannot believe it. I ſhall confine myſelf to combating the two principal objections which they have hitherto made againſt every plan propoſed for changing the capital of the department.

In the firſt place, they argue, that in caſe of invaſion by the Engliſh, it would be eaſier to iſſue the neceſſary orders from Niort, to direct the march of the national guards, and in ſhort, to take all the neceſſary orders to repel them.

This objection at firſt ſight may appear very plauſible, but it falls to the ground of itſelf, as ſoon as it is examined. In fact, the Engliſh being able to come only by ſea, we muſt in that caſe ſuppoſe, that there was no place on the firſt line in a ſituation to oppoſe them; but whilſt Rochelle

and the neighbouring ports are in ſuch a ſtate of defence, it is to be preſumed, that if the Engliſh ever attempted a deſcent, they would direct it to a very different point. Thus, not only has this objection no weight, but I further inſiſt that it may even be retorted; for if troubles ariſe in the interior of the department, and experience has but too clearly proved that this danger was more to be feared than the chimerical deſcent of the Engliſh, I may enquire how the agents of government, ſtationed at the extremity of the angle, can take thoſe quick and ſpeedy meaſures, which can alone ſtifle ſeditions in their birth?

Could Brutus have fruſtrated at Rome the treaſon of Tarquin's adherents, or the kings of Lacedemon have prevented the revolts of the Helots, if they had been at twenty leagues diſtance from the ſcene of thoſe conſpiracies? Let us then candidly confeſs, that the Vendée would never have made ſuch progreſs; but rather that the civil war would have been cruſhed at its outſet, if the adminiſtrative bodies had been ſtationed in its centre. The preſence and authority of the organs of the laws would have been ſufficient

ficient to keep within the bounds of duty, the few malcontents who ſtirred up this war: the Vendean, better inſtructed in his true intereſts, and viewing the enormous diſproportion of his ſtrength, would not have ventured to truſt his property and exiſtence to the chance of ſo unequal a ſtruggle, and we ſhould not have to lament at this day the ruins which cover theſe unfortunate provinces.

The ſecond objection is not more ſolid. The inhabitants of Niort pretend that no town can be formed near the centre, capable by its buildings and extent of accommodating the chief authorities. This objection alſo falls to the ground, if it can be proved that it is poſſible to find a town adapted to this purpoſe. The reader ſhall preſently be convinced that it is not difficult to find ſuch a ſituation. After having thus refuted the objections, I ſhall confine myſelf to pointing out the inconveniences which reſult from the preſent ſtate of things*.

The

* It is very probable, that the inconveniencies ſtated by the author exiſt; but in the preſent moral and political ſtate of the Vendée, the Government would act unwiſely, if it removed the ſeat of departmental adminiſtration from a

The heavieſt, doubtleſs, is that of which the people have ſo much reaſon to complain, namely, the being at the greateſt poſſible diſtance, from the authorities, from whom alone they can obtain juſtice. The greater part not being able to undertake ſuch expenſive journies, are reduced to the hard neceſſity of neglecting their affairs, and giving up well founded claims.

In the ſecond place, inſtruction, which is the ſoul of a republic, cannot be propagated, and remains confined to a privileged corner of the departmen', without a poſſibility of the majority of the people being able to ſhare in its advantages.

The diſſemination of inſtruction in the Vendée, is the only way to prevent freſh troubles; but let me aſk how miſerable ruined landholders can ſend their children to central ſchools, at the diſtance of twenty leagues from their homes?—Can it be expected that mere ſchoolmaſters, decorated

town, the inhabitants of which are ſuch examples both of good principles and conduct to the provinces around them. Niort during the war in the Vendée merited much more than the ſcanty eulogium of the author.—*Note of the Tranſlator.*

with

with the pompous title of Inſtitutors, will be able to diſſeminate thoſe valuable principles of knowledge, of which they have not the leaſt idea themſelves?

The final reſult then of what I have juſt ſtated to be the caſe is, that the city of Niort is ſurrounded by thoſe who have no connection with it, whilſt all thoſe who have occaſion to go to it upon buſineſs, are much too far from it. I dare even go further, and maintain that the very eſtabliſhment of the department itſelf is radically bad, and that there is not one in all France worſe arranged.

The reader muſt recollect, that at the time of the formation of theſe eſtabliſhments, the deputies of the ſeveral towns beſieged the Committee of the Conſtitution. Every one wanted to have a department for his town; and as the large cities had a great number of repreſentatives and friends, it is not aſtoniſhing that without regard to the centrality, they often carried their point in oppoſition to their competitors. What I have juſt ſtated, was abſolutely the caſe with Niort.

The

The neighbourhood of Fontenay, which is only four leagues diſtant from it, and that of the department of Charente which borders upon it, for a long time fixed the attention of the Committee of Conſtitution, but at laſt ſolicitations carried the point, and it was reſolved, that Niort ſhould have a department. It is true, that to obviate the numerous inconveniencies which reſulted from that ſtation, it was agreed, that St. Maixent ſhould alternately enjoy the ſame advantage. But the deputies of Niort had no great trouble two years after, in getting this inconvenient turn done away, and their town was maintained in the full poſſeſſion of the valuable privilege.

As it generally happens one abuſe brings on another; by making a department of Niort, they were obliged to diſmember that of Fontenay, and at one ſtroke they ſpoiled the arrangement of both in their diviſions. Thus, inſtead of giving to the department of the Vendée ſome parts of Niort, St. Maixent, and Melle, which were ſo convenient for it, and diſtributing the other parts of theſe diſtricts, either in the department of the Lower Charente, or in that of Vienne, to which they are reſpectively adjoining, they even uſurped part of the territory at Fontenay; the two neighbouring

bouring towns became the frontiers of their department, and only perceived a line of two leagues in extent between them. This plan once adopted, it was neceſſary to annex to this new department a ſufficient number of diſtricts: they could neither be taken from the ſouthward nor the weſtward of Niort; it was therefore indiſpenſably neceſſary to reſort to the northern ſide, in conſequence of which the diſtricts of Thouars and Chatillon were ſelected to make up the complement, or in other words, were ſacrificed to pretended convenience.

It follows from what I have juſt ſhown, that it is is eſſentially neceſſary to form the department of the two Sèvres anew; its baſis is too faulty to expect that it will form a good diviſion.—Narrowed too much towards the ſouth, it has too much breadth towards the north; and do what they will, they can never find a common centre for the intercourſe of the inhabitants of Niort and Argenton, Chatillon and Chef-Boutonne; the diſtance between theſe different countries are too conſiderable, and their manners too oppoſite; in ſhort, the Upper Vendée requires an eſtabliſhment within itſelf, and a particular regime. This point

once

once determined, the following is the new plan which I would propoſe.

Diſtribute the parts of the diſtrict of Niort, St. Maixent, and Melle in the neighbouring departments, in the manner that I have juſt pointed out. Carry your central eſtabliſhment into the heart of the Upper Vendée, upon the banks of the Sèvre-Nantaiſe, which ſpot appears to me the moſt convenient placed between La Fôret-ſur-Sèvre and Chatillon; compoſe this new department of the parts of the former diſtricts of Parthenay and Thouars, in following the courſe of the Thoué, of Vitriers, and Chollet, of the territories of Mortagne, Chatillon, Breſſuire, Argenton, La Forêt-ſur-Sèvre, and the lands ſituated ſeven leagues beyond that river, and you will have a well rounded department, not leſs conſiderable than that of the two Sèvres. At firſt ſight, this plan preſents ſeeming difficulties; I ſhall therefore attempt to do them away.

I may be aſked, what will become of the parts of the diſtricts of Thouars and Parthenay, ſituated beyond the Thoué, if this plan be adopted. In reply to this objection, I anſwer, that the neareſt diſtricts may be retained in the new department, and

and that the others will be very well ſatisfied with being annexed to the department of Vienne, having ſeveral times ſolicited that favor.

It may alſo be objected, that by this plan I take away from the departments of the Vendée, Mayenne and Loire, a part of their territory. I anſwer, that with reſpect to the firſt, its loſs is very amply compenſated by the new diſtricts ſuperadded; and that with reſpect to the ſecond, it will have no reaſon to regret the loſs of a few devaſtated diſtricts, which their great diſtance from the chief ſtation prevents being cultivated again; that in the ſecond place, it would preſerve a part of the diviſions of Vitriers and Chollet, which would reduce its loſs to a few communes; that laſtly, this department is much too extenſive, exceeding the neighbouring departments by near one third, which is contrary to republican principles, equally applicable to the diviſion of territory, as to any thing elſe.

Finally, it may be ſaid to me, how can you lodge your adminiſtrative bodies in a country town, and even in the open country?

To this objection I anſwer, that after burning ſo many towns in the Vendée, nothing could be more glorious for thoſe who govern, than to eſtabliſh a colony in the midſt of theſe ruins, and to build a city there, worthy of its founders. Every thing ſeems to favor the idea; the materials of every kind which abound in this province, and at the loweſt rate; the advantageous ſituation on the Sèvre, upon whoſe banks were formerly erected manufactories, which might again be rendered flouriſhing: add to theſe conſiderations, that the greateſt part of the inhabitants of Chatillon and Mortagne, who were burned out, and who for the want of means to repair their houſes, are ſtill exiles in the neighbouring departments, would ardently embrace the opportunity of returning to their country, and would with pleaſure ſettle in the new city. Every thing then ſeems favourable towards deciding the government to put this laudable and generous plan into execution. The advances which it would be under the neceſſity of making would very ſoon be amply reimburſed; in leſs than twenty years the expences of this eſtabliſhment would be repaid; and without having exhauſted the public treaſure, it would acquire immortal glory, in raiſing a country from its ruins,

ruins, and thereby meriting and receiving the gratitude and bleſſings of the whole of the Vendée.

Methinks I already hear thoſe cold calculators, whoſe political views never can take a wide range, reply to me, "Into what expences will you hurry the government? Are you not aware that, having been obliged to carry on a deſtructive war, it cannot afford to give any aſſiſtance towards executing your plan?"

I ſhall only obſerve to them, that it is calumniating the government to aſſert, that it does not reſerve funds for encouragement of agriculture, whilſt its attention is ſo bent upon that intereſting object, that it is conſtantly offering premiums to thoſe who diſtinguiſh themſelves in the cultivation of lands, in the forming new plantations, or making experiments, affording them for theſe purpoſes every ſort of encouragement and even advances of money. Government is too well informed not to be ſenſible, that nothing can be taken from a fund without ſome returns being made; that all uncultivated land is ſo much loſs to the ſtate; that to devote ſome money to the renovation of a province, is to ſow

in order to reap a plentiful harveſt; it is lending its money at the higheſt intereſt, and opening inexhauſtible ſources of public proſperity: it muſt feel, I ſay, that by reſtoring its agriculture and commerce to a ruined province, it increaſes the means of ſubſiſtence in the ſtate, and conſequently the quantum of population; in a word, that from the inſtant its receipts begin to fail in any department, it ought to make a point of immediately giving it aid; ſince, notwithſtanding the reſources of the moſt expert financier, it is impoſſible to be always taking out of a purſe without filling it again. Such at this day is the ſituation of the Vendée; ruined and defolated as it is, it bears the ſame burden as before the war, which led to its deſtruction. It even ſinks under the weight of its taxes; the huſbandman is obliged to diſpoſe of his capital, and the collectors in the diſcharge of their duty, are obliged to make uſe of the intervention of a ſwarm of bailiffs and tipſtaffs, which alone, according to the ſeventh axiom which I have laid down, is ſufficient to convince me that the debt is too great, and that government will feel the juſtice of diminiſhing the taxes, or affording the means of paying them. The moſt practicable of theſe means, and certainly the moſt effectual, is to found the colony

colony which I propoſe. All governments, both ancient and modern, feel the neceſſity of theſe eſtabliſhments. Without mentioning Alexandria and ſo many other cities, which, under the dominion of Alexander, regulated the affairs of the empires which he had conquered, are we not informed that Rome and Carthage, thoſe very flouriſhing republics, attained their higheſt pitch of proſperity only by means of their colonies? It may alſo be remarked, that it was in the midſt of their moſt cruel wars that theſe wiſe republics thought it proper to eſtabliſh barriers between themſelves and untractable or reſtleſs ſubjects and allies. Would Carthage have been able to preſerve her poſſeſſions in Spain for ſuch a length of time without Carthagena; and without her colonies on the Rhine, could Rome for ſo many ages have been able to reſtrain the efforts and irruptions of the warlike people of Germany?

It was in the midſt of the wars of Africa, of Perſia, and Italy, that the emperor Juſtinian built or eſtabliſhed in his ſtates more than fifty towns; and, as Evagrius has judiciouſly obſerved, the glory which he derived from theſe eſtabliſhments, will appear more brilliant in the eyes of poſterity

poſterity, than the ſplendid victories of Beliſarius and Narſes. But why quote foreign examples? was it not in the midſt of the cruel wars which menaced France with ruin, that Francis I. and Lewis XIV. prodigal as they were, built cities, dug canals, made ports, and joined ſeas? and cannot the French Republic, no leſs powerful than Rome under its Scipios, or than France under its Charlemagne, undertake to build a city in a deſolated country, on which the reſtoration of a province, the advantage of the ſtate, and the public proſperity depend?—But it is too much to dwell on ſuch frivolous objections; I ſhould be afraid, by continuing, to wound the dignity of a magnanimous nation; I therefore deſiſt, and reſume my ſubject.

I have enlarged a little upon the particulars of the firſt means that I pointed out, becauſe I conſider it as the fundamental baſis of my plan. I go on to the ſecond, and ſhall ſhow that the navigation of the Thoué and the Sèvre may powerfully contribute to the re-eſtabliſhment of the Vendée.

According to the fourth axiom which I have laid down, it is certain that without canals, the moſt fertile countries cannot become flouriſhing;

as

as ſoon as the low price given for his commodities impedes the efforts of induſtry, the huſbandman is diſcouraged, and can no longer engage in any kind of ſpeculation: but the difficulty of carriage is what clogs induſtry the moſt; and no ſooner does the expence of conveyance ſwallow up two-thirds of the produce of his exportations, than the diſcouraged farmer neglects the cultivation of all articles of which the carriage is attended with difficulties. His ſuperfluity is in ſome meaſure loſt to him, and often for want of a channel for ſale, poverty beſieges him in the midſt of abundance. Canals then are of ſuch infinite importance, that the proſperity of a country may be eſtimated by the number it contains. China, ſinking under the weight of its immenſe population, only ſubſiſts by means of its navigable rivers; Holland, in the midſt of its marſhes, finds its proſperity in the facility of its water carriage, whilſt the greater part of fertile Poland labours under miſery in the midſt of abundance. In our republic, all the inhabitants on the banks of the Seine, the Rhone, and the Loire, are in eaſy circumſtances, while thoſe of the no leſs fertile provinces of Berry and Poitou can hardly procure money enough to pay their taxes. All theſe inſtances tend to ſhow that there can be no trade without canals or navigable rivers.

Although

Although the Vendée is only watered by inconſiderable ſtreams, it is nevertheleſs poſſible to ameliorate its ſituation in that branch. The Thoué, in order to be made navigable, only waits the will of the government. Some years ago, *Lenain*, the intendant of Poitiers, took up this buſineſs: an engineer ſent by him to the ſpot, was commiſſioned to take plans and preſent memorials on the ſubject. Theſe intereſting papers were depoſited at the time in the office of the Secretary of *Intendance*, and it will not be difficult for Government to procure them. But the deplorable ſtate of the finances, and the misfortunes which took place from the maritime wars at the end of the reign of Lewis the XV. prevented the Government from following up this laudable deſign; and although the engineer only aſked a moderate ſum to put it into execution, he could not obtain it. Nothing would be more creditable to Government at this period, than to reſume ſuch a uſeful project. There is not perhaps any undertaking of this kind in France that would require leſs money. It is only neceſſary to make a few locks, and to deepen in two places where there are flats, as has been done above Montreuil-Bellay; where at only a hundred thouſand livres expence, the ſame river has been rendered navigable

vigable to Saumur, ſituated at about three leagues diſtance from it. All that is requiſite then upon the whole, is to proceed in the ſame way as far as Thouars, at four leagues diſtance from Montreuil. I am convinced in leſs than ten years, the tolls which might be eſtabliſhed on that river would reimburſe the government for all its advances. This project, ſo eaſy and ſo little expenſive, would be of the higheſt conſequence to the Vendée, and in ten years would render it as flouriſhing as it is now miſerable. All the ſurplus of the Vendean produce, conveyed by land carriage at a ſmall expence to Thouars, upon a road of which I ſhall hereafter ſpeak, might be embarked upon the Thoué, conveyed to Saumur, Tours, Orleans, and paſſing by the canal of Briaire, might even reach the capital. Paris would alſo receive conſiderable pleaſure as well as advantage in ſeeing Vendean merchants ſelling their commodities in its ports.

The navigation of the Sèvre-Nantaiſe would afford no leſs valuable benefits to the Vendée. I ſhall not enter into any details reſpecting the means of rendering the river navigable; I can only offer the Government on this head, the teſtimony of a few well-informed men, who have

aſſured me, that it would be poſſible to navigate it at ten leagues from its mouth, which alſo muſt be left to the engineers to aſcertain. I ſhall content myſelf with obſerving, that there are many who in the courſe of ſuch examinations find it much eaſier to cut the Gordian knot than to untie it, which government will doubtleſs take care to prevent. But on the whole, the advantages which the Vendée would reap from this navigation would be incalculable; for whilſt part of its produce, by means of the Thoué, might be ſold even in the capital, the other part, by going down the Sèvre, would reach the banks of the Loire, would ſell to advantage in the markets of Nantes, and in the port of that town or that of Paimbœuf, might be ſhipped in the Spaniſh or Dutch veſſels which traffick in theſe ports.

I have now ſhown the advantages which the Vendée would derive from the navigation of the Sèvre and the Thoué; I paſs over to the third remedy which I have pointed out, viz. that of conſtructing two great roads.

If money forms the nerve of the body politic, it may be ſaid that high roads are its veins; they alone were

were of more ſervice to the preſervation of the Roman empire, than all the valour of their commanders; to theſe the French Revolution is indebted for its progreſs, and the Republic alſo for a part of its victories. When the barbariſm which ſucceeded the reigns of the Conſtantines and the Theodoſius, had entirely obliterated thoſe ancient monuments of Roman glory, commerce was annihilated in Europe. This beautiful quarter of the world became a den of ſavages; the arts and ſciences diſappeared; the inhabitants were reduced to exchange their commodities only among neighbouring diſtricts; neighbouring kingdoms became unknown countries; with the love of luxury, the reliſh for induſtry was loſt; and in a word, if the deſtruction of the Roman roads brought on the ruin of trade, the failure of the latter plunged Europe into the thickeſt darkneſs of ignorance and feudaliſm.

Since the revival of commerce and the arts, every government has exerted itſelf in conſtructing high roads in its reſpective ſtates. France, from the number it contains, is perhaps the moſt convenient country in that reſpect; but whilſt the greateſt part of the departments enjoy this valuable

able advantage, the greater part of the Vendée is totally deprived of it. Excepting two bye roads from Saumur to Chollet, and from Montreuil to Parthenay, in a ſpace of near two hundred ſquare leagues, I do not know of any road that can be deemed practicable: nor have the majority of the inhabitants of the Upper Vendée a y more communication with Fontenay, Nantes and the other neighbouring towns than with Germany and Italy. The Government muſt perceive how much this privation muſt tend to deaden all induſtry among the Vendeans, to confine them to their own diſtricts, render them a diſtinct people, and impede all progreſs towards civilization.

The only means of obviating theſe inconveniences is what I propoſe. It is abſolutely neceſſary then to conſtruct two high roads, which may interſect each other at right angles near the new town of which I have before ſpoken. The firſt would lead from Poitiers to Nantes, and the ſecond from Thouars to Sables-d'Olonne, preſerving the direction I have already deſcribed.

With reſpect to this ſubject I muſt obſerve, that in the conſtruction of the former of theſe roads, they might work on the foundations of the ancient

ancient Roman road, of which ſome traces are ſtill diſcoverable*. I may alſo add that the high road from Poitiers to Parthenay being already made, a quarter of the taſk is done. The ſecond of the two roads which I have propoſed, might ſerve for a communication between Paris, Fontenay and Sables; it would ſhorten by twenty leagues the road now uſed. On this head I muſt remark, that it is aſtoniſhing even to this moment, Government has not thought of changing the ordinary route from Paris to Rochelle, and ſend its couriers by way of Mans, La Flèche, Saumur, Thouars, Parthenay, Niort, &c. &c. which would afford travellers the advantage of ſhortening their journey, finding proviſions at a much lower price than what they are obliged to pay; and in a word, meeting with much more convenient roads. The Vendée would likewiſe derive from theſe changes the advantage of ſelling a conſiderable ſurplus of its hay, and no longer find itſelf obliged to conſume it without profit, or ſell it at a low rate.

* There are ſome traces of it to be ſeen in the town of Forges, and near the New Houſe.

The

The laſt of theſe changes would occaſion only a trifling expence; all the high roads are in tolerable condition; there are only a few bridges to be repaired, and poſt houſes eſtabliſhed. If the Government condeſcends to adopt my views, and to make the roads which I propoſe, the Vendée will want nothing further, and its proſperity will henceforth be inſured. The firſt road will cut the new department from eaſt to weſt, and the ſecond from north to ſouth; the one will facilitate its exportations into the departments of the interior, and the other will at all times open eaſy communications with the ſea ports. Beſides theſe two great roads, which would run through all the interior parts of the department, it has already two bye-roads, viz. that of Thouars to Parthenay, and that from Doué to Chollet, the advantages of which are incalculable. There would then be very few departments in the republic, where the communications of every kind would be more eaſy; and where, conſequently commerce and induſtry might take deeper root.

Having thus pointed out the advantages which the Vendée might derive from the propoſed high roads, I ſhall proceed to the fourth object which I mentioned,

I mentioned, and ſhew by what means a new activity may be given to its ports.

Maritime commerce is become ſo neceſſary to the proſperity of ſtates, it is ſo much connected with the ſucceſs of agriculture, that in general a dry ſand, ſituated advantageouſly upon the ſea coaſt, preſents to the political obſerver more advantages than a fertile ſoil deprived of the means of communication: Athens and Tyre, ſituated in the midſt of a moſt ungrateful ſoil, attained the higheſt degree of ſplendour, while the more fertile provinces of Perſia and Aſſyria languiſhed in the midſt of barren abundance.

The marſhes of Holland at this period are the ſources of more wealth than half the kingdoms of the north; and we ſee England rule the ſeas by her fleets, and draw more treaſure into her ports, than the moſt flouriſhing empires of antiquity ever poſſeſſed. France, as advantageouſly ſituated as her rival, has for a length of time diſputed the commerce of the whole world: and had it not been for the errors of Lewis XIV. had it not been for the ſelfiſhneſs and apathy of his deſcendants; in a word, had it not been for the immenſe burden which the republic has had to ſup-

port

port in a war againſt all Europe, it is probable that we ſhould by this time have wreſted the dominion of the ſeas out of the hands of the Engliſh. Now that the continental peace appears confirmed, it is likely that the Government will direct its views to our navy and our ports.

Although the Vendée has no ports on its coaſts of great importance, we may be allowed to hope that none of the means which it affords will be neglected to improve its maritime trade, to repair its ports and bays, and, in a word, to correct nature in thoſe places where it offers the feweſt obſtacles to be ſurmounted. It was by ſuch efforts that the celebrated Coſmo de Medicis was enabled, in ſpite of nature, to create the port of Leghorn, and to draw commerce and induſtry into his ſtates; it was by ſuch means that the Hollanders were enabled to ſurmount difficulties deemed inſuperable, and to reſcue from the ſea a now flouriſhing country. Fortunately the French Government has no ſuch efforts to make to repair the ports of the Vendée; the moſt difficult taſk without doubt will be, that of engaging foreigners to reſort thither. Even to this day, theſe ports have been ſo neglected, and have had ſo little credit, that the Spaniards who have buſineſs to

tranſact

tranſact in the departments of the weſt, inſtead of coming by ſea, and landing at the ports of Sables or Nantes, have conſtantly preferred coming by way of Bayonne and Bourdeaux, although the journey by this road coſts them treble the expence. It will perhaps be difficult for Government to induce them to change their route, and to draw them to our ports; but there is reaſon to believe that it will ſucceed, when it ſhall preſent advantages for commerce; when permiſſion ſhall be given them to export ſalt, and ſuch ſurplus of grain as they may ſtand in need of; when they ſhall find themſelves no longer ſubjected to thoſe minute and inſulting precautions, which have been habitually exerciſed againſt them in the greater part of our ports; when in ſhort they ſhall ſee that the ſyſtem of prohibitions has been abandoned*. This would be the proper place to point

* A liberal idea which it would perhaps become all governments to adopt, would be to leave all commerce free, and to admit of no prohibitory ſyſtems, with the exception only of the articles indiſpenſably neceſſary to the ſubſiſtence of the people. It may be imagined by ſome, that by giving that latitude to commerce, we ſhould be liable in France to ſee our ſpecie transferred to foreigners, and our manufactures deſerted

point out the numberleſs abuſes which follow a prohibiting ſyſtem, and what injury does it to trade; but the bounds which I have preſcribed

ſerted; but I do not think that this apprehenſion is well founded. If we prefer foreign commodities, foreigners have the ſame deſire to obtain thoſe of which we are in poſſeſſion; the human heart is every where the ſame: we ſeek for objects with eagerneſs in proportion to the diſtance from whence they come. In exchange for the monkies which China ſends us, ſhe delights in the playthings of Europe; the Peruvian gave up heaps of gold to the Spaniards for knives; the African beſtows his ivory for grains of glaſs; the Canadian his beaver ſkins for a few bottles of brandy; in ſhort, the reality is every where neglected, while we run after the ſhadow; faſhion and caprice alone fix the price of the greateſt part of articles; tea, coffee, chocolate, and ſpirits have made the fortunes of men in Europe, becauſe they come from a diſtance. From the ſame motive our European merchandiſes are ſought by the Aſiatics; and whilſt the European petit maitre enjoys the luxury of the *ananas* of India, the Indian prefers to the delicious fruits of his own country one of thoſe apples which we every day tread under our feet. It appears from what has been obſerved, that were an unlimitted trade permitted, there would be nearly an equal advantage.

An object of this importance, however, demands a diſcuſſion of greater length. I ſhall confine myſelf to the obſervation, that till I have proof to the contrary, I ſhall continue to think with a celebrated miniſter, that there is but one maxim to follow reſpecting trade;—*Laiſſez-nous faire*.

to

to myſelf will not permit me to enter into theſe particulars; beſides, I am too well convinced of the wiſdom of government, not to believe that this point will be ſpeedily remedied.

The principal articles of trade between the Spaniards and the Vendée, would be for the former, grain, ſalt, fat oxen, leather, mules, linen, and cloth; the latter would receive in exchange, oils, groceries, medicinal drugs, dye ſtuff, ſheep*, and

* Our politicians have conſidered it as impoſſible to accuſtom the Spaniſh ſheep to the French climate, and pretend that their removal from a warm country into a moiſt and temperate climate, would deſtroy one half of the race, and cauſe the other to degenerate. Theſe declamations made too ſtrong an impreſſion at the time on the mind of Colbert, and deprived France of an invaluable benefit. To conquer theſe prejudices, it ſeemed requiſite that a nation ſituated at the extremity of the north of Europe ſhould prove to us, by its example and ſucceſs, that the Spaniſh ſheep may be eaſily accuſtomed to the climate of any other country. At the period of the revolution which reſtored the Swedes to freedom, that people reduced to make uſe of foreign ſtuffs in their dreſs, reſolved to rid themſelves of ſuch an irkſome ſtate of dependence in that particular; they ſent to Spain for ſheep, which in a few years multiplied to ſuch a degree, without degenerating in any perceptible manner, that in 1763, the Swediſh manufactures

and metals. Fairs might be eſtabliſhed at Sables, and in other towns of the Vendée, which would ſoon become noted from the concourſe of foreigners of different nations; for it is clear that the Spaniards ought not to be the only nation admitted into the ports of the Vendée; the Dutch and other allies of the Government ſhould ſhare equally in the ſame advantages.

employed forty-five thouſand perſons. From ſuch an example of ſucceſs in a country like Sweden, it may be preſumed that the French government will neglect nothing to procure for France, and particularly for the Vendée, ſuch great advantages, and augment the ſmaller number of thoſe valuable animals, for which we are already indebted to its paternal care.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XI.

SECONDARY MEANS OF RE-ESTABLISHMENT.

I have juſt pointed out the principal means by which the Vendée may be re-eſtabliſhed: I am firmly perſuaded, that by adopting theſe means, this country will be placed in the moſt proſperous condition it can poſſibly attain; and without which it will never have either a moral or political exiſtence ſuitable to it. Be that as it may, I conſider the meaſures which I am about to propoſe, as the moſt effectual for the reſtoration of that country. Theſe meaſures have almoſt all, according to the meaſures which I have pointed out, the ineſtimable advantage of bringing no expences with them, nor any advances; and if the poverty of the public treaſure ſerves as a pretence for delaying the execution of the

the principal parts of this plan, the ſame motive will not militate againſt thoſe which I ſhall now unfold.

In general, agriculture is very much neglected among the Vendeans; the deſtructive ſyſtem of fallow lands is become a real ſcourge to that country. Out of two hundred and ſixty acres of land, the huſbandman ſcarcely ſows a hundred each year. This general neglect is owing to three principal cauſes: firſt, to the want of exports; ſecondly, to the difficulty of conveyance; thirdly, to the weight of taxes*, which ſcarcely leaves

* The Vendée is ſo deſtitute of money, and poſſeſſes ſo few openings to trade, that the collection of taxes in ſpecie will always meet with difficulties. There is no doubt but that a tax in kind, adopted with ſome reſtrictions, would be more advantageous to that part of the country. For ſuch a tax nothing but labour is required. At the time of the diſcuſſion reſpecting taxes in kind, it was too ſlightly aſſerted and beleived, that this ſyſtem had never been followed in Europe. In the ſeventh century there was no other known in Germany, and even in France, nor was it obſerved that the farmers were more unhappy on that account. Throughout almoſt every kingdom of India, the taxes are paid by labour, or in kind, and there are fewer poor in that quarter of the globe than in Europe.

leaves the husbandman the common necessaries of life, and consequently prevents him from attempting any kind of speculation. I may add to these considerations, that the kind of barley known by the name of *Baillarge* (*Hordeum Distichon*) which the neighbouring districts cultivate with so much advantage, are by no means suitable to the light and sandy soil of the Vendée, and that consequently, it cannot derive any advantage from

rope. The Chinese know no other tribute, and are prosperous. This tax is laid on according to the quality of the soil, from a twelfth to a thirtieth part of the produce. One part of it is employed for the maintenance of the troops and the magistrates, and the other is placed in warehouses for the public necessities in times of scarcity.

Invariable good order prevents abuses, and for ages this tax has never been increased. There is no doubt, that to their religious adherence to this system the Chinese are indebted for that splendour, which has raised them to the first rank among civilized nations; if this flourishing empire has existed with reputation for so many centuries, it is because the taxes in kind have prevented its peasants from oppression: the state only requires a proportion of what they raise; it shares with them the vicissitudes of times and seasons, becomes rich or poor with the people, and the merciless hand of a financier never seizes upon the subsistence of a family, or makes it pay the produce of a harvest which it has not reaped.

that

that valuable reſource. It is true that the farmers might replace the cultivation of the *Balliarge* by that of other grain, no leſs uſeful and profitable; but the ſtate of diſtreſs into which they are ſunk, puts a ſtop to every exertion; beſides, the Vendeans, invincibly attached to the cuſtoms of their fathers, are from character hoſtile to all innovation. It is neceſſary then for Government to begin firſt with combating that ſpirit of routine, which in the Vendée is the greateſt enemy to agriculture. The beſt means of ſucceeding are, doubtleſs, example and emulation. The colony which I have propoſed can alone produce this emulation, and do away the evil of fallow lands. The Alſatian would carry with him into the Vendée the culture of the rape ſeed, the Limouſin that of potatoes, the Breton that of buck-wheat; each would tranſport with him the ſpecies of induſtry moſt appropriate to his province; the native of Franche-Compté would teach the Vendean to put his milk to profit, and make cheeſe after the manner of his country; the Norman would open a new branch of commerce, by making excellent cyder of the apples with which the country abounds, and from which to the preſent day no benefit has been derived*;

* A landed proprietor of my acquaintance, ſome time ago made

the native of Flanders might teach him to cultivate hops and ſubſtitute beer for wine, which nature has denied to the greater part of the country; in ſhort the concurrence of ſo many different huſbandmen would excite to induſtry and the love of gain; would raiſe the value of produce four-fold by the activity given to trade and agriculture, and, awakening emulation and the moſt active paſſions of the human heart, would rouſe Vendean induſtry from the apathy into which it is plunged.

I have already ſpoken of the cultivation of rape ſeed, buck-wheat, and potatoes. If I have given the preference to theſe productions above every other, it is from the perſuaſion that they are the moſt fitted to ſucceed in the Vendée*.

made this experiment with complete ſucceſs; from twelve buſhels of apples he obtained ſixty bottles of cyder of good quality and well taſted.

* I think, however, that the ground piſtachio-nut, (*arrachis Hypogea*) ſo well known in the kingdom of Valentia, might here be cultivated with ſucceſs. This plant requires a light and ſandy ſoil, like that of the Vendée: its advantages are known; the oil extracted from it is almoſt as good as the oil of olives, a pound of ſeed producing a pound of oil: a handful of this ſeed will ſow four ſquare toiſes, and ten perches of land will produce twelve hundred plants.

thoſe three ſeem deſtined by nature to proſper in the light and ſandy ſoil of that country. The firſt offers many advantages: its leaf will be of uſe in fattening cattle, and its oil for the conſumption of the country.

I ſhall further obſerve that it only requires one pound of ſeed to ſow twenty-four toiſes (or forty-eight ſquare mètres), which renders its cultivation cheap. The ſecond often ſupplies Britanny during a ſcarcity of rye; it makes excellent fodder for cows, and is of uſe in fattening poultry; the advantages of the third are too well known to make it neceſſary for me to point them out; I ſhall remark only, that the potatoe is the moſt uſeful production of Europe, and that it is the real bread tree of the ancient continent.

Beſides the means which I have juſt pointed out, Government ought to turn its attention to the cultivation of the cheſnut tree. It appears that formerly the whole country compriſed between the Thoué and the Loire, was covered with theſe very uſeful trees. Almoſt all the wood work of the ancient buildings in thoſe countries, is compoſed of beams and rafters of cheſnut, although at this day but very few trees of this ſort are found in thoſe diſtricts.

diſtricts. Its culture is ſo much neglected, that I am perſuaded, in two centuries hence there will be none left in the Vendée. New plantations then ought to be immediately made; and if the Government will give but even ſlight encouragement, I am convinced that the proprietors will engage in them with ſucceſs.

The culture of the white mulberry tree would likewiſe afford great advantages, and would open in the Vendée a new branch of commerce. The few trees of that ſpecies which ſome friends to agriculture have endeavoured to naturaliſe, have compleatly ſucceeded; I, nevertheleſs, believe that the beſt plan for ſtocking the Vendée, would be to graft them upon quinces, wild pear, elm, poplar, and a few other indigenous trees, and I have no doubt, but that they would proſper in a very ſhort time.

Endeavours ſhould alſo be uſed to procure from the Spaniards, in exchange for the productions which they buy, ſome of thoſe fine rams which they breed. It would prove an invaluable benefit to the Vendée. The rams would croſs the preſent breed, and I am perſuaded, that in twenty years the wool of that country would

not yield in quality, nor in value, to the fineſt Engliſh wools*.

The means which I have hitherto pointed out, only tend to revive agriculture and commerce. But all the ſucceſs which they are capable of producing, will be looked for in vain, if unanimity and activity do not preſide over the execution. Whatever zeal magiſtrates may have for the encouragement of agriculture, their efforts are generally unſucceſsful. The multiplicity of their other labours is always injurious to that branch of their adminiſtration; on the other hand, the neceſſity they are ſometimes under of executing rigorous laws, deprive them of that degree of confidence, without which it is impoſſible to obtain great ſucceſs. Throughout the whole of

* "There are in Poitou, (according to M. Buffon) ſheep which ſeem to be of a foreign breed, and which are larger, ſtronger, and better covered with wool, than thoſe of the common race; the ewes alſo breed better, and often bring forth two lambs at a time, or two lambs in a year. *Buffon's Natural Hiſtory*, Vol. 6, page 250, *Paris Edition*, 1765.

If theſe ſheep were croſſed by Spaniſh rams, I have no doubt but that in a given time the Vendée would have as fine ſheep as are now in England.

the

the Vendée, the people are accuſtomed to, confound the law with its inſtruments, and to conſider the aſſeſſor of the taxes as the author of them: they alſo fear their magiſtrates more than they love them; the protector is loſt in their eyes, while they only view him as the governor. The ancients and moderns have all been ſenſible, that to render agriculture flouriſhing, it is neceſſary to give it immediate protectors. Xenophon informs us in his Cyropedia, that what rendered the kingdom of Perſia ſo flouriſhing was the inſtitution of ſuperintendants or inſpectors, known by the names of the *prince's eyes and ears*. No one is ignorant that if Charlemagne had not inſtituted officers, known by the name of *miſſi dominici*, he would not have been able to repreſs the numerous abuſes of which the peaſantry were the victims, and have given his reign that immortal luſtre which rendered it the moſt flouriſhing æra of the French Empire.

From what I have juſt ſtated, then, I ſhould conſider the inſtitution of new commiſſaries, under the name of *Promoters of the Arts and of Agriculture*, as very uſeful to France. Theſe men, who ſhould have no coercive authority veſted in them, and

and whoſe only arms ſhould be a direct correſpondence with the miniſter, and the reſpect attached to their virtues and talents, might effect the greateſt good without being able in any caſe to do harm. As advocates of the unfortunate huſbandmen, they would find no difficulty in gaining their confidence; it is to them that they would repair to make thoſe ſecret complaints againſt the ſeverity, and frequently the injuſtice of treaſury law ſuits, the inequality of the aſſeſſments, the ſcantineſs of their harveſts, the ſtagnation of trade, and ſo many other inconveniencies attached to their condition. Freed from the troubleſome and expenſive formalities of petitions, certain of addreſſing themſelves to men honoured with the confidence of Government, who would forward in a direct manner the complaints they might deem well founded, they would no longer form thoſe ſecret cabals, thoſe private conſpiracies, and give themſelves up to every ſpecies of diſcontent, the effects of which are to ſour them againſt a government from which they think they cannot obtain juſtice, to make them liſten to the inſinuations of the ill-diſpoſed; and, in ſhort, to produce thoſe terrible exploſions which have ſo often endangered the exiſtence of

the

the republic. I ſhall certainly be anſwered that the councils of the *Arrondiſſemens*, and the mayors, ſufficiently anſwer the purpoſe of the inſtitution which I propoſe. Whoever knows the human heart will not require me to waſte time in refuting this objection.

According to the ſixth axiom which I have laid down, Government ought always to grant ſome aid to thoſe places where the receipts are in arrears: now, I will maintain that there are few departments in France, where the recovery of taxes is more difficult than in the Vendée; it is, therefore, more immediately neceſſary for Government to give it aſſiſtance. The cauſe of the difficulty found in the collection, is not to be attributed to the unwillingneſs of the aſſeſſed; it can only be imputed to the ſcarcity, or rather the almoſt total diſappearance of ſpecie. I would therefore recommend to Government to make part of its purchaſes in that country. It is always in want of ſtores for its depôts, food and cloathing for its troops: woolens, cloth, cattle, and other productions of the country, purchaſed by its agents, would conſtantly diſperſe conſiderable ſums, the greateſt part of which, after circulation, would revert to the national treaſury.

The

The reſidue would ſerve for the reſtoration of agriculture, by giving to the huſbandman the means of making the neceſſary advances; for one of the prejudices which is moſt injurious to it, and which, unfortunately, is radical in the greateſt part of Europe, is that of hands alone being neceſſary for the cultivation of the land; the experience of every age which has preceded us, ſerves to prove that the earth returns in proportion only to what is given it, and that a great harveſt ſuppoſes a great previous expence.

The laſt remedy which I ſhall propoſe to Government appears to me to combine great advantages, and might be uſefully employed throughout the whole republic.

There exiſts, in almoſt every great town, an infinite number of charitable eſtabliſhments, known by the name of hoſpitals, houſes of correction, &c. Let me aſk whether it would not be better to remove theſe eſtabliſhments into the country, than to pen them up in populous cities? The price of commodites, higher always in large towns than in the country, often reduces to the moſt abſolute want ſuch eſtabliſhments, which every where elſe would be comfortable

and

and flouriſhing. I would therefore recommend it to Government to remove into the Vendée the numerous hoſpitals of Angiers, Nantes, Niort, and other ſurrounding towns*. Burdenſome for the moſt part in theſe towns, they would prove of great utility in the country from their conſumption of neceſſaries of every kind; and for the maintenance of theſe hoſpitals, ruinous grants or other extraordinary means would be no longer wanted. A ſpring which riſes out of a high ground, fertilizes the country around it, and waters in a thouſand different directions; ſituated in a flat ground, it becomes a marſh, the peſtilential vapours of which corrupt all around it. It is abſurd then to place theſe kinds of eſtabliſhments in the centre of conſumption, inſtead of fixing them at the ſources of produce.

Were theſe meaſures to be adopted, we ſhould ſee the Vendée, now covered with ruins and aſhes, ſoon change its appearance and put on a flouriſhing aſpect; inſtead of thoſe ſecret murmurs

* There exiſts in the Vendée a great number of convents, which Government might purchaſe at a low rate, having been ſold for very moderate ſums, and where they might remove the above-mentioned hoſpitals.

and ſuppreſſed emotions, ſad effects of miſery and deſpair, nothing will be heard but ſongs of joy, the affecting tokens of general content and happineſs. Peace for ever eſtabliſhed, inſtruction ſpreading with rapidity, agriculture flouriſhing, induſtry freed from its ſhackles, exportation made practicable by main roads, commerce facilitated by interior and exterior navigation, the money of foreigners flowing through a thouſand different channels, and even ſpreading into the neighbouring departments: ſuch are the effects that would follow the execution of the plan*. What a cheering and delightful proſpect for a true citizen! what an illuſtrious and brilliant career would be opened to the Government! what bitter recollections effaced! what a contraſt between theſe ſerene days, and the ever execrable æra of the reign of anarchy! Reſpected abroad, tranquil at home, France happy and triumphant would preſent to the beholder, the image of a fortunate iſle, againſt whoſe peaceful ſhores the angry waves ſpend their fury in vain.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

I have now gone through the various branches of this work, and draw near the end of that task, which my feeble talents proſcribed me. In my firſt chapter, I attempted to trace the origin and deſcribe the manners of the Vendeans; the ſecond chapter has been devoted to the topographical deſcription of the Vendée, its population, and its trade before the war. Many critics may attempt to refute what I have advanced on the ſubject of the population, by quoting the accounts made out by the order of Government. I have ſeen theſe ſtatements, and have not followed them, becauſe I was convinced of their fallacy.

With

With reſpect to what relates to commerce, I confeſs that I was obliged to found my obſervations on general views; I was obliged to draw the mean proportion between the exports of large and ſmall communes, and content myſelf with ſuch local information as I could procure: I can affirm, moreover, that far from exaggerating their produce, I have taken care to eſtimate them at the loweſt average. Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, contain an hiſtorical ſketch of the Vendean war. If I have ſometimes enlarged upon this ſubject, I confeſs I could not reſiſt the ſecret impulſe which hurried me on. Had I been writing the hiſtory of a foreign country, I ſhould perhaps have followed the ordinary routine of hiſtorians, and been the cold narrator of events. But in a civil war which had nearly effected the ruin of my country, of which I was a witneſs, and which coſt ſo many Frenchmen their lives, it was impoſſible for me to reſtrain my pen, or my indignation at the various crimes which ſullied the conduct of both parties.

The reader will alſo be ſenſible, that an hiſtorical eſſay may differ from hiſtory; that within the narrow limits which I preſcribed myſelf, I was able neither to point out all the cauſes, nor enlarge

enlarge upon all the events. Further, if the impartiality which ought to prevail in a work of this kind, obliged me in ſome meaſure to do juſtice to the valour and military talents of the inſurgents, I have never failed to lament the fatal blindneſs which led the Vendée on to its ruin.

Chapter VIII. contains ſome particulars reſpecting the interior government of the Vendée during the war, and the moſt celebrated generals on both ſides.

Chapter IX. treats of the ſtate of commerce and agriculture in the Vendée ſince the war. I am not afraid of being taxed with exaggeration in the picture which I have drawn of its preſent ſituation. I was obliged to mention in the ſame chapter, the efforts which the Government conſtantly made for the reſtoration of the welfare of that unfortunate country, and to ſhow that theſe have hitherto proved inſufficient. It remained for me to point out the means of attaining that end, which I have ventured to attempt to do in the preceding chapters IX. and X. To ſupport the ſyſtem of reſtoration which I have propoſed, I thought it right to ground it upon principles which I conſider as political

political axioms. All the means which I have propoſed are merely corollaries or conſequences, which I think ought to enſure them ſome ſucceſs.

I leave it for the reader to determine whether I have accompliſhed the taſk which I have propoſed to myſelf. I feel, moreover, that the ſubject which I have been treating is one of the moſt intereſting poſſible to the hearts of Frenchmen. What pains me is, that my abilities are too weak to expreſs all the importance of the ſubject.

Governors! O ye whoſe eyes are conſtantly fixed upon the exiſtence and proſperity of thirty millions of men, remember always, that by your ſituations, you are like the ever watchful eye of providence, and that nothing without you can receive motion and life! The wretched Vendée looks up to you for its new exiſtence. Buried under the weight of its ruins and aſhes, it feels that by your means only it can be reſtored to happineſs. Alas! to give ſome rays of hope to that deſolate land, you have only to feel the deſire of doing ſo, ſince you have all the means and all the inſtruments in your own hands, fit

to

to begin the work. Shut your ears againſt thoſe who would wiſh to perſuade you that the Vendeans may again prove ungrateful children! Be aſſured that the return of general happineſs will entirely fill up the precipice which deſpair had deepened, and that the inhabitants of the Vendée, henceforth faithful to the voice of their common country, will employ only againſt our foreign enemies, that ſpirited valour which ſignalized their actions but too fatally in the courſe of our civil wars.

NOTES

NOTES.

No. I.

THE firſt official news which the Convention received of the inſurrection in the Vendèe, in 1793, reached it on the 15th of March. Citizen Niou, the commiſſary of Government, wrote from Saint Hermand in the following terms:

"CITIZENS,

"By the reſolutions which we addreſſed to you, on the 13th of this month, you muſt have perceived the deplorable ſtate of the Lower Loire. A dreadful inſurrection occaſions the greateſt devaſtation in that country. The bridges on the road from Nantes are broken down. There was a very ſharp engagement this morning between the national guards of Fontenay and the rebels. Unfortunately the former were repulſed with loſs; the town of Chantonnay is taken and laid waſte. General Marcé is juſt arrived at St. Hermand with twelve hundred

men from Rochfort and Rochelle, and immediately ſet out with ſeven hundred men and three pieces of cannon to defend the bridge at Charron, which the enemy wanted to break down. At my requeſt, five hundred men are juſt arrived from Niort; I expect as many from Rochelle and Rochfort. We cannot, in fact, aſſemble too many troops. The inſurgents are compoſed of ſeveral bodies; that which attacked my troops this morning, conſiſted of about three thouſand men. They are commanded by experienced leaders; and their manœuvres are more ſkilful than could be expected."

On the ſame day (the 18th of March) the miniſter at war tranſmitted to the Convention, the particulars relative to the inſurrection, which he had received from general Verteiul.

No. II.

The terror of the towns neareſt the place of inſurrection, cannot be deſcribed. An idea may be formed of it by the letter which the adminiſtrators of the Lower Loire wrote on the 11th of March, 1793, to the neighbouring departments.

"Brethren and friends, fly to our aſſiſtance! our department is in flames: a general inſurrection has juſt broken out; the alarm bell is every where ſounding; the inſurgents pillaging, aſſaſſinating, and burning every thing. The

The patriots, few in number, are every where falling ſacrifices to the fury and fanaticiſm of the inſurgents. If you have any troops to lend us, or means of defence to, aſſiſt us with; if you have ſoldiers, men, or weapons, ſend them to us; never were they more wanted."

No. III.

The following is the official report which the repreſentatives of the people, accompanying the army of the coaſts of Rochelle, ſent to the National Convention, reſpecting the battle of Fontenay:

Niort, May 26th 1793.

"In the ſituation we are in, citizen, colleagues we think it our duty to inform you officially of the check which we yeſterday experienced at Fontenay, and of the attack with which we are threatened from the rebels.

"Laſt Friday (the 24th) we had met, to the number of ſeven, at Fontenay-le-Peuple to concert our operations; we were informed that on the evening before, ſymptoms of diſcontent had been obſerved in the army of la Châteigneraie, commanded by general Chalbos. We conceived that the preſence of the repreſentatives of the people might be uſeful in that army; in conſequence of

of which, three of our body went there in the morning with general D'Ayet; they found tranquillity reſtored, and the ſame evening returned to Fontenay. But juſt after their departure, about ſix in the evening, general Chalbos was informed that the rebels were making preparations to attack him in La Chateigneraie, where it was impoſſible for him to hold out, becauſe that town and its environs had been laid waſte by the inſurgents. He then thought it prudent to fall back upon Fontenay, which he effected during the night, in good order, and by the advice of his council of war; by five in the morning all his army had arrived at Fontenay. At about half paſt twelve at noon, information was received, that the rebels were making their appearance in the ſame plain where they had been ſo compleatly defeated on the 16th. In an inſtant the *generale* was beat, and ſhortly after the army drew up in ſight of an immenſe number of rebels, formed in three columns. The latter had no artillery, but they advanced upon us with the greateſt intrepidity; the engagement became extremely hot; the chaſſeurs of la Gironde kept up a terrible fire; every volunteer of the free company of Thouloufe and of Hernault fought valiantly, like heroes, and with ſome other batalions, animated by the repreſentatives of the people preſent at the action, were already making an impreſſion on the rebel columns, when the brave Chalbos ordered the *gendarmerie* to charge, in order to cut them to pieces. It would have been all over with thoſe hordes of plunderers, if the general's order had been executed; but ſhameful to ſay it! five gendarmes alone advanced; the reſt, frightened by the

flight

flight of a few cowards, fell back, and ran away at full ſpeed, trampling our infantry, which ſtood in their way, under foot. At length the infantry finding itſelf abandoned by the cavalry, and being overpowered by numbers, was itſelf thrown into diſorder, and in a ſhort time the rout was compleat: our army, diſperſed by the rebels, was purſued on the road from Fontenay to Niort, where general D'Ayet and brigadier Nouviou, having rallied twenty-five gendarmes only, charged two hundred men of the enemy's cavalry, and made them fall back. By this means they protected the retreat of part of the infantry into Niort."

I muſt obſerve that this report is one of the moſt faithful which was preſented to the convention; all the facts are exactly ſtated: thoſe who drew it up were actually on the ſpot, at the head of the republican columns.

No. IV.

It was aſſerted at that time, that the inſurgents procured their powder and ammunition from England, and that they were paid by that power. But theſe periods have been confounded; in the ſecond year of the war, they did receive aſſiſtance from the Engliſh government, but until the paſſage of the Loire, they always relied upon their own ſtrength, and had no other arms or ammunition than what they could take from the republicans. To convince the

the reader of what I aſſert, I ſhall here give an extract of a letter from citizen Bruſlé, a commiſſary ſent into the rebel departments. This letter was read at the ſitting of the commune of Paris, on the 17th of May. Although the author may be accuſed of ſome inaccuracies, and ſome falſe ſtatements, it does do the leſs credit to the diſcernment of citizen Bruſlé.

"The rebels (ſays he) occupy, at this moment, part of the territory of ſix departments:—The central point is at Chemillé, Mortaigne, and Chollet.—They have collected in theſe places their reſerves of proviſions, which conſiſt principally in herds of oxen, which are permitted to feed in the meadows. The number of rebels cannot be aſcertained; it is almoſt equal to the population of theſe countries, for they compel every body to march. Their armies conſiſt of from twenty to twenty-five thouſand men; (Citizen Bruſlé ſhould have ſaid from thirty to forty thouſand men); they are armed with fowling pieces, having neither ſwords nor bayonets. They have no muſkets, but what they have taken from the patriots; the greater part of them are armed with pitchforks, ſpits, and ſticks; they have about thirty field pieces, but no large artillery. They are often without powder. The brigands have no ſort of military organization; they have neither regiments, different ranks of officers, nor plans of compaigns (this laſt aſſertion is incorrect); they march in columns of three or four men deep, led on by one of the chiefs, who alone knows the object of themarch. When they fight, they conceal themſelves in buſhes; (the

(the greateſt part of the battles which they have fought, were in the open field, and not under cover) four or five men appear in different directions, ſlipping along the ſides of hedges and ditches, trying to get as near as poſſible, without perceiving any order of battle, and ſhouting like ſavages; after that they extend to right and left to ſurround our troops, &c.

No. V.

The victory of Saumur, and the taking of Angers, carried terror into the capital and the provinces to ſuch a pitch, that it is hardly to be deſcribed. The following is the manner in which the deputies from the city of Nantes, expreſſed themſelves at the bar of the convention on the 22d of June:

"Citizen Repreſentatives, how long will you ſuffer yourſelves to be deceived with reſpect to the ſituation of the departments of the weſt.—Nantes is on the eve of ruin:—Ordinary meaſures will no longer avail. The alarum bell of liberty muſt be rung throughout the whole republic; all France muſt riſe to cruſh the rebels. Without this extraordinary meaſure all is loſt; this torrent will ſweep you away in its rapid courſe.—We ſhall ſoon have no other alternative but to mingle our blood with our brethren and children, and to die in the moſt horrible agonies of deſpair."

A deputy

A deputy immediately converted the requeſt of the inhabitants of Nantes into a motion; another went farther, and moved, that the hour ſhould be fixed, in which a general alarm ſhould be ſounded throughout the republic. Fear had magnified the danger to every eye, and France never thought herſelf ſo near her ruin.

No. VI.

It appears that ſeveral members of the government were not without anxious fears reſpecting the march of the Vendean army, and that they were even apprehenſive for the capital. The following is the manner in which a member of the Committee of Public Safety expreſſed himſelf, in the ſitting of the convention of the 7th May, 1793.

"Care muſt be taken to fabricate arms of every ſort, in order to put Paris in a reſpectable ſtate of defence, for the view of the enemy is to deſtroy this city. Forges muſt be put up in all the ſquares, in order to increaſe the energy of the citizens, by the ſight of new means of defence."

No. VII.

It was aſſerted at the time, that the Committee of Public Safety had never been acquainted with the real truth,

truth, reſpecting the diſturbances and battles in the Vendée: there is nothing more plainly proved. The commiſſaries of Government in general, ſtationed about twenty leagues from the field of battle, were forced to rely upon the accounts of certain prejudiced or badly informed agents; their falſehoods, inſerted in the official reports, were circulated throughout all Europe, and held out to every reader as authentically true; whilſt eye witneſſes of the facts ſhrugged up their ſhoulders on reading theſe ſtrange rhapſodies, and inwardly grieved to ſee the Government, thus deceived, take wrong meaſures, diametrically oppoſite to its real intereſts.

No. VIII.

I have already obſerved, that the convention had been conſtantly deceived by the official reports tranſmitted by its agents. If an unanſwerable proof of this fact be required, it will be found in the report which was addreſſed to the Government, and read to the convention in its ſitting of the 27th of Auguſt, 1793.

"We have freſh ſucceſſes to report to you; the rebels are diſorganiſed, the remains of their army are flying before our republican generals; preſſed hard by famine, they kill one another for a piece of bread. A meſſenger, arrived this inſtant from Saumur, announces the capture of all the inſurgents' ammunition.—It is a fact, that we have not above ſix thouſand determined men to act

againſt. Authentic reports confirm all theſe facts, and you may rely upon them. All that now remains, is to riſe and cruſh at once theſe brigands."

When it is conſidered that theſe rebels, deſcribed as hard puſhed by famine, and reduced to a ſmall number, made head, in a month after, againſt three republican armies, that they even beat them in ſeveral engagements, one cannot help being aſtoniſhed at the extreme aſſurance of this babler. He was doubtleſs deceived himſelf by falſe reports; it is more candid to think ſo, than to believe that he wiſhed to impoſe ſo barefacedly upon the convention.

No. IX.

How could the Government be made properly acquainted with the cauſes and events of the war in the Vendée, when thoſe very men in whom it placed the greateſt confidence, were moſt earneſt to deceive it? A noted repreſentative of the people expreſſed himſelf in the following manner on this ſubject, in the ſitting of the Jacobins of the 11th of September.

"This army of the Vendée, about which there is ſuch a noiſe, is nothing but a collection of hogs*, of

* This reminds one of Edmund Burke's ſwinish multitude.—*Note of the Tranſlator.*

people

people who have not even a human form, and of lawyers." It is curious enough to ſee attornies here confounded with a herd of ſwine and monſters, and held up in ſome meaſure as the leaders of the Vendée: This compariſon is ſo much the more bitter, and unſeaſonable a ſatire, as its author, to the beſt of my recollection, was a lawyer under the ancient government.

No. X.

It appears that after the engagement at Chantonnay, General Tunck had quitted his army for ſeveral days; the official reports which were read at the ſitting of the convention, of the 10th of September, all agree upon this point. Theſe ſame reports ſtated the Vendean army at thirty thouſand men. On the ſame day, a letter was read from a repreſentative, ſtating in ſubſtance, that all the citizens were riſing in maſs, whilſt the army of Mentz, joined to another of a 100,000 men was making preparations to extirminate the fugitives. In eight days hence, added he, France may be ſure of victory; but the ſucceſs of theſe great meaſures, did not anſwer the expectation that had been formed of them.

No. XI.

We have ſeen from the report inſerted in the Note, No. VIII. that the rebels of the Vendée, were ſtated at

ſix

thouſand men at moſt: the convention muſt have been very much ſurpriſed in its ſitting of the 16th of September, to hear a letter read from a general in chief of the republican army, dated from Saumur, the 14th of the ſame month, which ſtated that the inſurgents had aſſembled three armies. Such a manifeſt contradiction ought to have thoroughly opened its eyes with reſpect to its agents: if it was deceived, it may ſafely be ſaid, that it wiſhed to be ſo.

No. XII.

On the 25th of September, 1793, one of the principal members of the Committee of Public Safety addreſſed the convention in the following terms:

"The requiſitions have produced in the Vendée, a fabulous army, which poſterity will hardly give credit to; it conſiſts of four hundred thouſand men, and was formed in four and twenty hours." We ſhall ſoon ſee, that this formidable army did not anſwer the high expectations which were formed of it. The ſixteen thouſand brave fellows of the army of Mentz, were more terrible to the Vendée than all that undiſciplined rabble; in ſhort, we may very properly apply the following line of Horace:

"Parturiunt montes, naſcitur ridiculus mus.

No. XIII.

The greateſt part of our coffee-houſe politicians have widely diſagreed with reſpect to the motives which they aſſign to the Vendean chiefs for the part they have ſeverally taken in this inſurrection. Some aſſerted, that their only aim was to reſtore monarchy; others went further, and aſſured us that their intention was to deliver up their provinces to the Engliſh, and, conſequently, to become Engliſhmen. They might have ſaved themſelves ſo many uſeleſs ſuppoſitions, if they had given themſelves the trouble to read the propoſals made in the name of the people of the Vendée to the republican authorities, by Gaudin Perrias, chief of the diviſion of St. Stephen de Nontluc, dated the 14th of March. Theſe propoſals were read in the ſitting of the convention of the 23d of the ſame month, and contained in ſubſtance, that there ſhould be no more drawing for the militia; that no horſes ſhould be taken from the farmers, except with their conſent, and on being paid for them; that the taxes ſhould be laid on with juſtice, and in equal proportions; that the directories ſhould never attempt to violate the liberty of the citizens, by ſending againſt them an armed force, which ought only to march by order of the tribunals and juſtices of the peace; that the freedom of worſhip ſhould be maintained; that every miniſter ſhould enjoy that tranquillity which the law ought to protect

protect him in; that the churches ſhould be opened for the celebration of divine worſhip; that every perſon in paying his miniſter, ſhould have a right to chooſe him, &c.

I ſhall make no obſervations on the juſtice or injuſtice of theſe propoſals. I ſhall confine myſelf to one reflection only, which is, that if the paternal government under which we live at this time, had then held the reins of ſtate, there is reaſon to believe that there would have been no inſurrection in the Vendée, and that France would not now be groaning under the cruel wounds, which ſhe received in that fatal and terrible exploſion.

No. XIV.

The repreſentatives of the people wrote from Cliſſon to the Convention, on the 22d of September.

"You were very much impoſed upon, when you were told the army of the rebels was reduced to ſix thouſand men; they have ſtill three armies compoſed of different corps, forming from correct information a total of a hundred thouſand men, of whom fifty thouſand are well armed and diſciplined."

The convention, receiving ſuch diametrically oppoſite accounts, could hardly avoid taking wrong meaſures; and

and it is beyond all diſpute to the ficklenefs of its agents, that the duration of that diſaſtrous war is to be attributed.

No. XV.

The convention, on fixing the 20th of October, 1793, as the period of the termination of the civil war, addreſſed the following proclamation to the ſoldiers of the army of the weſt:

"Soldiers of liberty, the rebels of the Vendée muſt be annihlated before the end of the month of October; the welfare of the country requires it, the impatience of the French people commands it, their courage ought to accompliſh it, &c."

It were without doubt much to have been wiſhed, that the aim of the convention had been attained; France would then have ſaved many thouſand citizens, and the Vendeans their property; but one cannot help ſmiling at the idea of having undertaken to fix the preciſe period of the ceſſation of hoſtilities.

No. XVI.

I think it right to give here an extract of a report made to the convention by one of its members, in its ſitting of the firſt of October:

"Citizens,

"Citizens,

"The inexplicable Vendée is ſtill in exiſtence, and the efforts of the republicans have been hitherto inſufficient againſt the robberies and conſpiracies of theſe royaliſts. Trifling ſucceſſes on the part of our generals have been followed by great defeats; thrice victorious at ſmall poſts, every one of them have been conquered in a general attack.—The army, which fanaticiſm has named *catholic and royal*, appears one day inconſiderable, and formidable the next. If it be defeated, it becomes in a manner inviſible; if it meet with ſucceſs, it is immenſe. Panic terror, and too great confidence have alternately exaggerated the enemy's force. It is a kind of prodigy to fools and cowards: an immenſe maſs, but not invincible for ſoldiers; a chace of plunderers, and not a civil war for a political adminiſtration. This catholic army, which has long been ſtated at fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, and thirty thouſand, is now, from the report of the repreſentatives, eſtimated at a hundred thouſand brigands. —Never ſince the *mania* of the cruſades, have we heard of ſo many men voluntarily aſſembling, as have ſuddenly appeared under the banners of liberty, to quell at once the too much prolonged inſurrection of the Vendée.— We have neither ſeen nor known how to take advantage, by ſtriking deciſive blows, and carrying on a war of irruption, inſtead of making regular attacks. Panic terror, which always irretrievably ruins the largeſt armies, this panic terror has ſeized, frightened, and ſcattered the whole like an empty vapour.

The

The Vendée has made progreſs from the inadequacy of the troops ſent againſt it, from the choice of treacherous or ignorant generals, from the cowardice of a few foreign battalions ..... from the inſatiable avarice of the adminiſtrations of our armies, who ſpeculate upon the war, and thrive on the loſs of battles; who increaſe their profits by the misfortunes of their country; counteract the military arrangements to prolong their advantages, and who enrich themſelves by the ſlaughtered heaps of the dead.——It is then towards the Vendée, that your whole attention and all your cares ſhould be directed; it is in the Vendée that you ought to diſplay the full force of national impetuoſity, and put into action all the power and reſources of the Republic.—In a word, every blow that you ſtrike at the Vendée, will re-echo to the rebellious towns. The Vendée, and nothing but the Vendée, is the political flame, which devours the heart of the body politic; it is there that you muſt ſtrike. With a comprehenſive and ſwift glance you will diſcover in theſe few words all the evils of the Vendée: too many repreſentatives, too many generals, too much moral diviſion, too much military diviſion, too much want of diſcipline in the hour of ſucceſs, too many falſe accounts in the narrative of events, too much avidity, too much love of money, and a deſire to prolong the war in the generality of the commanders and adminiſtrators."

This eloquent report is, without diſpute, the moſt perfect, and the moſt authentic picture (except in a very

few inſtances) that ever was held up to the view of the convention.

No. XVII.

At the engagement of Chatillon, the brave republican, general Chamben being mortally wounded, exclaimed, "I die for my country, I am happy!" He expired in a few hours after. I muſt obſerve that the report which was ſent on the 9th of October, to the convention, is incorrect in ſeveral of its aſſertions.

No. XVIII.

The following is an extract from the official report of the repreſentatives of the people, reſpecting the rencounter at Chollet.

"Our troops would have entered Chollet the ſame day, if night had not overtaken them. They kept guard on the road till the morrow, when all our united columns advanced upon that town, before which the enemy had collected all its forces. A bloody engagement took place, and the fire was terrible on both ſides; but the genius of liberty prevailed, and we were victorious.——The rebels attacked again the very next day; never was there greater fury ſhown than they exhibited on this attack; never perhaps was there a more bloody battle fought: it laſted from noon till 8 o'clock at night, when they were thrown into diſorder on every ſide."

No. XIX.

No. XIX.

The convention, conſtantly deceived by falſe reports, at laſt loſt all patience. One of the members of the Committee of Public Safety expreſſed himſelf as follows, in the ſitting of the 15th Brumaire, 2d. year:

——— "The dreadful day approaches, in which the light of truth will clear up all the myſteries of the Vendée: that day, in which, with a bold hand, we ſhall tear off the bandadge which has hitherto concealed and yet conceals all thoſe diſtant intrigues, all thoſe local manœuvres, all thoſe military treaſons, thoſe different ſpecies of ambition in the chiefs, which have too long foſtered this civil war. — — — Victories coloured over, half ſucceſſes exaggerated, captures never made, fabulous narratives, all will be examined, and the nation will be revenged. — — — "

No. XX.

The battle of Mans was too important, and too honourable to the republican armies, to permit me as an impartial hiſtorian to omit an extract of the official report, which was addreſſed to the national convention, and was read in its ſitting of the 24th Frimaire.

"Citizen Colleagues,"

"By closely pursuing the infernal band of brigands, we at last came up with them yesterday, under the walls of Mans, which they had entered the night before, as we informed you in our last letter. Our cavalry, which had kept constantly at their heels since their defeat at Angiers, pursued them so closely yesterday, that a very warm action began between them and us. At first they repulsed us, as well on account of the superiority of their numbers, as because they were advantageously posted in front of Pont-Lieu. Elated with this success, they advanced rapidly; and were already shouting *victory!* when the genius of Liberty decided it otherwise. The column of Cherbourg, commanded by general Tilly, was there; and far from being intimidated by the retreat of their brethren in arms, and by the boldness of the enemy who pursued them, the soldiers of the division of Cherbourg fell upon the rebels, and, after the first fire, pursued them with the bayonet, put them to flight, and killed a great number of them..... It was nine o'clock at night; a terrible fire of musquetry began on both sides, every foot of ground in the town was disputed, and the battle lasted till two in the morning; both sides watched each other's motions. The banditti took advantage of the darkness to evacuate the town..... Chiefs, marchionesses, countesses, priests in plenty; cannons, coveted waggons, coaches, baggage of all sorts, fell into our hands..... The streets, houses, public places and roads, are strewed with carcases, and this massacre has already lasted fifteen hours.

"In

"In a word, Citizen Colleagues, this is the moſt deciſive day that we have had for the ten months that we have been fighting theſe brigands..... Marceau, the general in chief; Tilly, commanding the diviſion of Cherbourg; and Weſtermann, by their bravery, contributed greatly to the ſucceſs of the day. The latter had two horſes killed under him, and received two wounds in the engagement, but would not quit his poſt..... What is particularly pleaſing is, that this deciſive victory has not coſt the republic thirty of its defenders, and we have only a hundred wounded."

We may fairly conclude, that the authors of this account had not counted the dead and wounded themſelves, and that they did not expect this part of their report to be believed.

No. XXI.

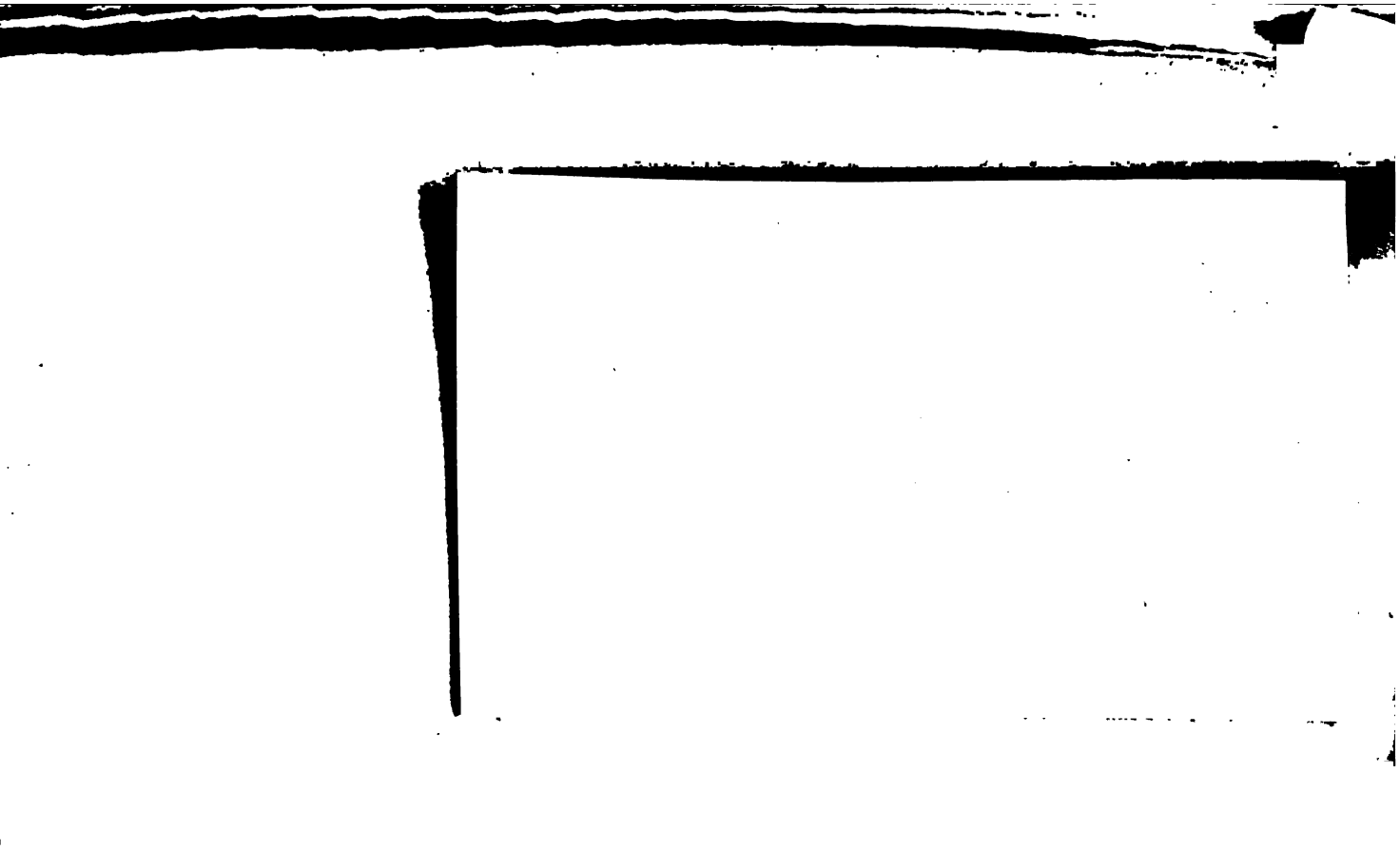
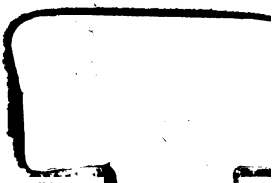
I think it proper to relate an anecdote here, which will juſtify what I have advanced on the ſubject of the unheard of misfortunes to which the Vendée became a prey in the courſe of the civil war.

After the burning of Chollet, the two contending parties for ſome time diſputed even its very ruins. The poſſeſſion of that important poſt gave riſe to ſeveral battles, in which the rebels were often defeated, but ſometimes came off victorious. Weary at laſt of ſhedding ſo much

much blood for a heap of ruins, both parties by mutual agreement abandoned it. Near Chollet, and round its ſcite, there are numerous eſtabliſhments, known under the name of *bleaching grounds*; it was in a ſpecies of covered gallery, that the manufacturers dried or bleached their cotton ſtuffs and handkerchiefs. For the protection of theſe goods, each of the manufactories kept a great number of dogs, which were let looſe at night againſt ſuſpected perſons and thieves.

Theſe dogs after the death or the flight of their maſters, aſſembled at Chollet to the number of more than four hundred, as ſoon as the town was abandoned: there they lived on human fleſh and dead carcaſſes for ſeveral weeks; this their food rendered them ſo ferocious, that after the peace, when the refugees of Cholet entered the town, they were like to be devoured. A whole republican battalion was obliged to march againſt theſe new adverſaries, who did not yield the place to the inhabitants until they were entirely deſtroyed.

FINIS.



B D JAN 15 1915